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ROSEDALE:

A STORY OF SELF-DENIAL.

BY MRS. H. C. GARDNER.

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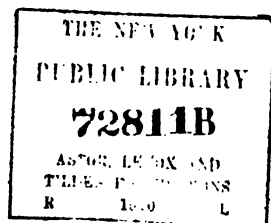
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PREFACE.

IN the following pages, which are now offered to the courteous consideration of the public, the author has endeavored to inculcate lessons of self-denial and patience. Truths thus presented in the form of a narrative, are more attractive to young readers than didactic essays or grave lectures; and the task of learning them is at once a pleasure and a benefit. How well the writer has succeeded in this effort, the reader must be his own judge; but if he expects to find in the progress of the story any strange adventures or hair-breadth escapes, any sudden developments or unnatural surprises, he will be greatly disappointed. The scenes are all laid in domestic life—most of them in the quiet and retreat of a rural village, and none of them in the bustle and hurry of business. If the perusal of the volume shall make a single one of its young readers more considerate of others, more forgetful of self, and more resolute to lead a better life, the author will be well repaid for her labor.



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ROSEDALE:

A

STORY OF SELF-DENIAL.

CHAPTER I.

"The moon is up—the watch-tower dimly burns,
And down the vale his sober step returns ;
But pauses oft as winding rocks convey
The still, sweet fall of music far away,
And oft he lingers from his home awhile
To watch the dying notes, and start, and smile."

THE evening had come—the silent, thoughtful evening. The great city felt its influence, and hushed its noise and bustle to a subdued murmur. The bright serenity of the clear, full moon was all unruffled, notwithstanding the varied scenes of joy and woe that it gazed upon in its tireless journey through the sky.

The proud bay gleamed like molten silver, and the myriad vessels upon its bosom were like fairy creations to the beholder, so clearly was the outline of sail and spar defined upon the blue, lustrous air. In the city the moon had burnished the spires and domes till they outshone the few pale stars in her train and nearly rived her own brilliance.

It was May, beautiful May—come with a coronal of delicate blossoms upon her brow and with bright promises of the green Summer in her hands. And the May moon peeped in at many a casement where the bland Spring air had been most welcome; into pleasant parlors filled with

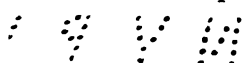
all the appliances of luxury, and her mild, soft rays illumined, with just light enough, the snug-curtained recesses, where early manhood and fair girlhood were holding sweet converse together. How pure were the beams that it threw into the wakeful invalid's chamber! How full of hope and almost spoken consolation! Without an effort the weary eye was drawn to the calm blue sky, and then to the eternal home of the blessed "far, far away."

Into the crowded attics and hovels of the poor the May moonbeams stole softly, very softly. They have a holy sympathy with sorrow, and O, what power has God given them to cheer the good, the desolate, the broken-hearted—wrapping in shadows whatever is gloomy and repulsive, bringing out and wreathing in light what is glad and encouraging!

Away down on the wharf, crouched low by a heap of coal, was a little ragged boy. If he were handsome, like the little boys in romances, he was so nearly hidden in an old straw hat that his beauty was of little use to him. Before sunset he had come to watch the shadows on the water, and so still and gradual had been the change from day to night that he had not observed it. He had been sitting there a long time, thinking about the water. He wondered how much there was—a great many buckets full he thought. And when the moonlight showed him—as he supposed—huge ships directly under those at anchor, ready to go to sea bottom upward, he thought the water must be very deep indeed.

Presently he observed a man on one of the submarine decks, leisurely pacing backward and forward with his head down and heels up, like a fly on the ceiling of a room. He seemed to be enjoying his promenade too, for the boy could hear him whistle.

He had unconsciously stepped backward while observing this, and chancing now to come in contact with some loose boards that were scattered on the wharf, he stumbled and fell into a thick puddle of black mud that a recent shower



had diluted into an unusually-liquid condition. He was not frightened, and he did not cry, as many an older child might have done; it was evident that he was used to mishaps, for he chuckled gleefully as he shook his great hat and tried to remove the sticky mass that clung, lovingly, to his trowsers.

"Well, I guess my clothes will be full as thick and a little stiffer, when this is dried on," he soliloquized. "Would n't Nellie stare at that man under water? The lady said this morning that if I was her boy she'd raise greens for the market on the dirt I carry about. What'll she say now? Ha! ha! There he is again! They have to learn to walk like that. I wish I could now, just to show Nellie," he added.

He continued to watch the man, who, tired of whistling, was singing, with all the might of a powerful pair of lungs, a curious love song, each stanza of which was ended with a pathetic but far-resounding repetition of "Ri tu de ni, Ri tu de ni!"

The lad watched him, evidently much puzzled with a phenomenon which he had never before observed. A new idea occurred to him, which he immediately communicated to himself.

"I should n't think he could breathe there—fact, I *know* he can't. Fishes breathe somehow, I suppose; perhaps he does like they does. If he was right side up he'd drown, for the water would run into his eyes, and ears, and mouth, and fill him up and sink him."

Then he fell to thinking about his own breathing—how he breathed—what made him breathe—what kept him breathing—how often he breathed—and then he held his breath and tried to get along without breathing at all.

The wharf had been much quieter than usual during the evening. There had been but few arrivals during the day, and most of the men belonging to the vessels in the harbor were on shore enjoying themselves with their families or sweethearts, or perchance engaged in a drunken carouse in

the gayly-lighted rooms of some remorseless land shark. When the bells of the city struck ten o'clock they began to return. They were very generally intoxicated and talking loudly. They were not particularly choice in their expressions, but mixed up abusive epithets with terms of love and endearment, and with profane oaths, in the most ludicrous manner. The child listened with the greatest apparent enjoyment. When two drunken sailors stopped near him and began to fight, he was so elated as quite to forget himself, and to give a shrill hurrah, as he had heard the street boys do on like occasions.

In a moment, drunkard-like, they forgot their quarrel with each other, and turned to assail the boy. A shower of coals upon his head and shoulders soon made him repent of his ill-timed enthusiasm. So small he was, so young, that to sober men he would have appeared an unfit subject for abuse, but what perception has a drunken man of size or age, or of any thing at all? The boy was one of the active sort, and before they could steady themselves to administer a second shower he was beyond their reach. Reeling, hiccoughing, singing, and quarreling, they pursued their way to their respective ships, while the child, now fully awake to the lateness of the hour, and happening also to recollect that he had the promise of a most uncommon thrashing if he was out after eight o'clock, made the best of his way home. A queer object he looked as he shuffled along the sidewalk in his uncouth array of rags and dirt, solitary even in his low degradation, for he sedulously avoided all intimacy with the daring young law-breakers who were growing up in the same haunts of vice with himself.

CHAPTER II.

"The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away in playful scorn,
And living as if earth contained no tomb."

THE morning beams struggled through a dim, dusty window, and faintly illumined the low, dingy-looking apartment where Gerald lay sleeping. It was much later than his usual hour for rising, but his late visit to the wharf the evening before had taken a couple of hours from the right end of his night's rest, which he was now trying to tack on to the wrong end.

It was no bed of down to which he clung so tenaciously. A bundle of straw and a bit of ragged quilt made up his couch, and sleeping as he did, with all his clothes on, he looked like a little old man instead of a chubby boy of nine years. This practice of never undressing had its advantages, his toilet being ready-made for all occasions. And as he was frequently pulled unceremoniously out of bed and sent into the streets to beg at midnight when the theaters and concerts were out, and was always liable to be dispatched to finish up his dreams in the open air, it really seemed a matter of prudence in the little fellow to be always dressed for society.

He tossed about uneasily on his hard bed, never remaining two minutes in the same position. Sometimes he was muttering broken sentences expressive alternately of pleasure and anger, ever and anon shaking his fists or laughing aloud at the curious fancies that crowded his brain. It was not the hardness of his pallet that made him so uneasy. He had brought into the world a nature so restless that he

had almost been a living exemplification of the long-sought principle of perpetual motion. He was never still. His mind was as morbidly active as his body, seizing with unnatural eagerness upon the commonest scenes or events in life, and transforming them by the power of imagination into subjects of absorbing interest. This peculiar activity, and the avidity with which he acquired knowledge of all kinds, good or evil, promised him future fame of some kind; but no prophet's eye could yet foreshadow whether he would be eminent for goodness or notorious for wickedness.

Alas for a mind like his, when the very atmosphere in which it expands is reeking with vice and pollution—when the coarse, profane song is the only music that falls upon the ear, and the drunken jest and sacrilegious oath form the staple of conversation!

Kneeling by Gerald's side was a pale little girl, dressed as shabbily as himself, in garments quite disproportioned to her size and far from clean. But her face, and neck, and arms were as pure and fair as Parian marble, and her long golden ringlets had been carefully smoothed with a very wreck of a comb that she still held in her hand. She softly pushed back the thick, damp mass of hair that covered his forehead, and stooping low kissed his cheek.

It was Nellie, his twin sister Nellie, speechless from her birth—deaf to all but him, dumb to all but him. From their earliest days an indefinable system of communication had grown up with them, understood only by their mother, and she was dead. Their slightest gestures and most careless glances were intelligible to each other, and in her brother's presence Nellie seemed wholly unconscious of the great affliction that to other eyes overshadowed her life.

The great love they bore each other—and it was so remarkable as to attract the attention of all who saw them together—was probably deepened in intensity by the fair child's helplessness. It was a beautiful but sad sight to see her in the gay streets clinging so closely to him, and to

know that in all the wide world they had none else to love, and none else to love them; for the holy sentiment of love has surely no place in a drunken father's heart.

There was a striking likeness between the two children. The features were the same, but the expression as unlike as could be. The shrinking timidity of her look was the very opposite of his bold, resolute glance. Shut out by her deafness from the impure contact of those about her, the baby-stamp of innocence and purity was still upon her brow; and to Gerald she became a guardian angel, unconsciously guiding to a better life in heaven. He would have lost all recollection of the love and care that blessed their infancy, and of their mother's early lessons of piety, but night and morning the little mute girl kneeled by his side, raising her clasped hands and soft blue eyes to heaven, and thus, by her sweet example, winning him to repeat the childish orisons long since learned at his mother's knees.

It seemed to Nellie, this morning, that he would never wake. He looked so tired that it seemed a pity to rouse him, so she waited patiently awhile longer. The old house shook with the noise of passing carriages, and heavily-laden trucks, and the heavy tread of the huge horses rattled the loose glass in the windows. The poor child trembled, and glanced fearfully toward the door at every fresh vibration of the old walls, for she had learned, long ago, to dread the approach of a rum-maddened father.

At last Gerald awoke. He started to his elbow and gazed eagerly around the room. The survey seemed to please him, for he turned with a bright, cheerful face to return his sister's caress, and to kneel by her side. And then, what a host of mute inquiries he had to reply to! He laughed uproariously when Nellie pointed so expressively to the coat of mud, now dried, and established as a permanent part of his attire. It recalled the last evening's enjoyment. Nellie laughed too. He looked so very funny when he stood up, that she could not help it, though she telegraphed to him an infinite amount of disapprobation

and disgust at the extraordinary quantity of dirt that he had accumulated.

It seemed to both of the children that a portion of it must be got rid of somehow. But how? Neither of them were capable of planning any thing to meet the emergency. A change of raiment was out of the question, which means that it was out of their reach. Nellie proposed washing his clothes while he remained in bed. She made her little slender fingers quite red with showing him how hard she could rub, but the old pump at the corner had been out of tune for a long time, and it required the united strength of both children to procure water to drink. It was idle to think of getting water enough for the necessary cleansing process, so they gave up contriving for the present, and climbed up to the high, solitary window that opened upon the street. They soon forgot their trouble in the interest inspired by the scene in the street below.

A motley crowd of people had gathered around a tall, vulgar-looking man who was grinding away, as if his life was at stake, at a miserable hand-organ. He wore a gray fur cap and yellow whiskers, and was grinning furiously. There were little wooden ladies and gentlemen in the front of the instrument, bowing to each other and dancing to the music, and a live monkey, which should have been wooden, was attached by a string to the man's arm. It was a merry sight, to say nothing, or as little as possible, of the music. The monkey had a cap on his head, with a tall feather in it, and a star on his breast to denote his rank. He manifested an amazing liveliness in collecting the loose change that chanced to be afloat in the crowd, and his odd little phiz, with its ugly, half-human look, won shouts of laughter from the lookers-on.

Presently, he found an opportunity to display his natural disposition. Nothing that a monkey can be taught, can, in the least degree, satisfy the malicious, destructive spirit peculiar to the little beast. A longing desire to do mischief, on its own hook, is inherent in every monkey's heart.

A little girl in the crowd, younger than Nellie, had been miles out into the green country to cull a bouquet of Spring flowers, to cheer the dismal, damp room where her dear mother was dying of consumption. When the soft breath of Spring stole in and kissed that mother's cheek, it brought with it visions so sweet and life-like, of the green lanes and sunny fields where her early days were spent, that even in her sleep she unconsciously murmured of daisies and wild roses, and of the clear springs dancing in the still, mossy dells. And the child, weary and worn out with nursing her, had forgotten herself and her fatigue, and had stolen softly out to spend the few morning hours, when her mother slept quietly, in preparing for her so glad a surprise.

Such beautiful sprigs of early green ! Such a profusion of wild violets, of cranes-bill, claytonias, and gay, coquet-tish trilliums ! They would have given a fresh charm to the proudest parlor in the city. And nestled among some bright, green mosses were three tiny buds of wild roses !

What a pity that she paused for a moment to look at the monkey ! With the quickness of thought he snatched her fragrant treasure, and, with incredible activity, before it was possible to interfere, he tore it in pieces and scattered it to the winds. A loud cry rang out on the air, but it was not the little girl who screamed so wildly, although the flush of pleasure had faded from her cheek and left her pale as a snow wreath in Winter. But Gerald, who had gazed with intense delight upon the beautiful flowers, could not repress a bitter cry at their wanton destruction.

At length the child, who had stood still as if bewildered, burst into a passion of tears, and, clasping her hands together as if they still held a part of her well-earned treasure, was hurrying away, when a strong hand was gently laid on her shoulder, and a rough, but kind voice, bade her be comforted.

"How can I take comfort, sir ?" she asked, still weeping. "The flowers were for my mother, and she is 'most dying."

Her voice was broken by her sobs.

"There, there, be quiet. Do n't take on so. It is only a few flowers. I dare say your mother won't blame you."

He was a stout, broad-shouldered man, with hair considerably silvered by time, and a face that could be stern, but whose habitual expression was cordial good-humor.

"I've been such a long, weary way for them," said the child, "away in the distant forest. Such a beautiful wood, sir!" she added quickly, and her eyes sparkled at the remembrance like diamonds. "I won't be strong enough to go again soon, and, O sir, if my mother should die before then!"

"There, there, that will do. Be quiet, that's a dear little girl. Do n't cry so; you will make yourself sick, and then who will nurse mother? Hallo!" he shouted, turning round to the few who remained of the crowd, "is n't there a boy here who will run up to the market for a sixpence, to get the prettiest posy that can be found for this little one?"

"I will go, sir," said Gerald, who had approached them.

"You go! Well, you look like going. Why, you're a perfect nosegay yourself, my boy."

"I can't help it. I fell into a mud-hole last night, and, and—we can't tell how to get this mud off. I'll go for nothing, sir."

"Rich folks, eh? Pocket full of money, an't it? Able to work without pay, I suppose. Why, what do you mean, boy?"

"I thought she might be in a hurry," replied Gerald, his cheek crimsoning at the strange gentleman's tone and manner. "She said her mother was sick. My mother is dead, sir. There is no one to care for us now. Shall I go, sir? I will hurry."

A glance at his open face seemed to inspire the strange gentleman with a little confidence, so he gave him his name to show to the flower-seller, and bade him hurry.

"Shall I pay for the flowers?"

"No; tell him I'll call directly. Stay! Tell him I'll

call this afternoon. Do you suppose I'd trust you with money? Why, you could bury it in the earth and still carry it around on your back. Ha! ha! Hurry, my lad, and get something pretty."

Gerald was back in an inconceivable short time, with a troop of boys at his heels, shouting after him, "A thief! a thief!"

He came up, panting for breath, and placed in the little girl's hand a bouquet of such rare beauty that she laughed and cried with delight.

"Is n't it handsome?" he asked, with a beaming face, as the gentleman, who had with sundry vigorous blows of his cane dispersed the crowd of boys, now came up to inspect the purchase.

"Handsome! I should think so. Will cost a handsome penny, I'll be bound."

"It's three dollars, sir."

"Cheap, now, is n't it?"

He winked at Gerald so queerly that the boy burst into an involuntary laugh, upon which he assumed a very stern look, and asked Gerald from what region he was transplanted.

"I do n't know what you mean, sir."

"Why, you do n't suppose that you are flourishing in your native soil, do you?" His curious glance at the boy's dress brought the color to Gerald's cheek.

"I do n't know what you mean, sir. I think you are very good to the little girl, and I'm real glad that you have given her some flowers. But"—

"Well, what else?" said the gentleman, eying him as if he were a newly-found natural curiosity, "what else?"

"You do n't like me, and I do n't like you, I *know*," replied Gerald.

Without waiting for an answer, and willfully deaf to the stranger's calls after him, he hurried round a corner and was out of sight in a minute. "Well, now! what a provoking imp! I have n't paid him for going. Do you

know him, my dear ?” asked the gentleman, turning with an expression of regret to the child.

“No, sir. If you please, my mother will wake up and miss me long ago,” said the little girl, anxiously. “May I run home now ?”

“Yes. Where do you live ? Won’t the boys chase you and get your flowers ? Stay ! I’ll go with you.”

“It is close by. That is the house. We live up three pair of stairs. I can go alone very well, sir.”

“And you are quite satisfied with these roses, are you ?”

She hesitated a moment. “They are very, very lovely. Mamma will think so, and I thank you so much ; but, O sir, it was the wild flowers that she spoke of in her sleep.”

What was it that made the eyes of that stout, rough man so dim with moisture ? “Your mother wants you this minute ! I know she does. What are you waiting for ?”

“I thought you looked sorry about something.”

“I sorry ! Not a bit of it. Just trip up those stairs to your mother, little one, as fast as you can go, and God bless you !”

The child courtesied and was gone in a moment. The stranger walked slowly away. He was the captain of a ship in the harbor. She was almost ready for sea, and was to sail on the morrow for a foreign port, to be absent three years.

“If I’d only paid that boy instead of joking with him,” mused the captain, as he approached the wharf, “I could sail with a better stomach. Did n’t he look odd, though ? Now, he’s what I call a declaration of independence, a regular Fourth of July oration !”

Gerald, by a little circuitous route, reached home in a few minutes after he left the captain. His father had not yet returned, and he and Nellie had not yet breakfasted. There was not a particle of food in the house. What could they do ? Gerald frequently ran of errands for gentlemen in the city, and thus obtained a few pennies to buy food, but no gentleman would employ him in his present plight. Some-

times, when his face was clean and his hair smooth, ladies who came in the cars would allow him to carry a small parcel or carpet-bag, but what lady would trust a parcel to a boy so beplastered with mud? It was not a favorable costume to beg in, for who would believe that such a dirty little rascal could speak truth if he tried? The prospect was rather a lugubrious one any way, from any position. Gerald leaned his head sadly on his hand and considered. If Nellie had only breakfast, he thought, he would n't care for himself.

Where was the father who should have cherished and provided for these little ones? In a low groggery, at the other end of the city, lying beastly drunk upon the floor. He had accidentally stumbled upon the means to procure liquor in plenty for a day or two. The little miniature likeness of her mother, that poor little Nellie had kept hidden so long; that she had only looked at occasionally, as a great treat, for fear of discovery; that only relic of the old, happy time, was gone. She had not yet missed it. Strange that the blurred, blood-shotten eyes of the brutish father need to have found out the little chink where it had hitherto been so secure! It was gone, gone forever, gone for rum!

Did not the sight of that sweet happy face, painted when she first became his bride, ere she knew his baseness, or had dreamed of the cruelty that brought her so early to the grave; did not the sight soften even his heartless bosom?

No! He clutched it as a dying miser grasps his treasure, and he kissed—not the rosy, smiling lips, parted as if to address him—but the bright gold in which the fair face was enshrined! How he hurried away! How his whole frame trembled with haste and impatience, as he sought the old haunts of vice from which he had been often rudely expelled when his money was exhausted! How he drank glass after glass of the liquid fire, till madness seized his brain, and he hurried as if possessed by a legion of devils, to his wretched home, to *spend his rage upon his innocent children!* Well

was it for Gerald that he lingered so long on the wharf. He did not see Nellie, who, pale as death itself, glided past him into the open air. How he raved, and stamped, and swore, as he groped around the room, and finding nothing to destroy, battered the naked walls in his maniac rage!

Nellie sat motionless, crouched low on the door-sill. An occasional shiver passed over her frame, but she was as silent as the pitying stars that watched her from above. Poor, helpless one! It was not the shivering night air that made her tremble. It was fear, and many a bolder child would have been filled with terror at such a time. She dared not venture alone into the bright moonlight; she half feared the light shadows that fell around her.

There were men returning to their homes in the same street, who saw her and heard her father's furious ravings. But no one interfered. One man, a stranger, paused a moment and spoke kindly to her, but seeing that he frightened her, he hurried on, saying half aloud, "Well, well, this an't the first case, by a dozen, that I have seen this 'ere blessed night. I believe the whole devil is out to-night, sartin."

When the jarring vibration of the house had ceased, and the exhausted drunkard had fallen asleep, Nellie stole softly in, leaving the door unlocked for Gerald, who came in soon after, but not till she was sweetly sleeping, forgetful of her sorrows.

All this, by her expressive looks and animated pantomime, she now communicated to her brother, often stopping to kiss his cheek, or, as her eye fell on his dress, to suggest some new but not very feasible plan for getting rid of the mud.

Noon came, but still their father was absent. Hunger began in earnest to assert its claims, and would on no persuasion quiet its demands for food. Their keen appetites even overcame their dread of their absent parent, and though they knew that his first act would be to thrust them into the streets to beg, they watched anxiously for his com-

ing, hoping that he would bring at least a morsel of food to them. It was a slender hope at best, for it was seldom indeed that he thus cared for them.

Grievous was the abuse that Gerald often received from his father because of his reluctance to beg. The boy sometimes thought that he would rather steal than stand so meanly in the crowded street, asking for alms. He would be so happy if he might only work. As he now looked into Nellie's pale, patient face, and felt how hungry he was himself, he thought again and again, "If I could only work!"

They went to the door and sat down on the sill to watch the passers-by. Gerald began to feel cross and impatient. Little child as he was, he knew that nothing could justify the cruel neglect in which they lived. When he saw a man pass on the other side, holding two little boys affectionately by the hand, he fairly cried with vexation. He was a brave, manly little fellow, and felt the injustice of their situation keenly. If he had ever felt any reverence for his father, it was long ago forgotten, and with it every trace of filial affection seemed to have been obliterated. In an under tone, as if he was afraid that Nellie would be able to hear, he vented his anger by calling his absent parent by every wicked epithet that he had ever heard. He even tried to invent new ones as he found his stock getting low.

"I wish I was out in the woods alone," he said, "how loud I would swear!"

Nellie watched him wonderingly. She knew very well how angry he was, but no answering emotion arose in her bosom. Her mildness provoked him to a fresh burst of ill-temper.

"She's so good, and so pretty, how can he help taking care of her? By and by he'll come scolding and jawing along, and lick us both. Then he'll say, 'You little, lazy villain, just march off and beg.' Then I'll say, 'I won't,' and I hope he'll kill me. No! I hope he'll be so mad he'll kill himself. O," said the undutiful son, straighten-

ing himself up, and doubling his fist, "he's an old bugger, that's what *he* is!"

Just then he saw a man, who was employed to water the streets, go by with his cart. A bright idea popped into his head, and making signs to Nellie to keep still, he ran out into the street.

"Will you please, sir," he began, as soon as he was near enough to be heard, "will you please to let me have some water to wash my clothes? See, they're all mud." It was an odd request, but the man was good-natured and stopped his horse immediately.

"Because," said Gerald, "I can't do errands nor beg with all this mud on, and Nellie and me have n't had any breakfast yet."

"Why, my lad," replied the man, laughing, "it would take water enough for seven streets to begin to make you decent. An't old Joe Cameron your father?"

The boy's cheek crimsoned, but he did not answer.

"Ah, well, never mind," said the man cheerfully, "I guess I can fix you somehow. Here's a few pennies to get you some dinner, and here is ninepence to pay any old woman to wash. Stay!" he said, interrupting himself, "do you know where Davy Lane is?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you go this evening to the first house in the Lane, coming from Allyne-street, and I'll get you some better things to wear. They'll be old, but they'll be clean at any rate, trust my woman for that. And they were not cut out for your great grandfather neither. Ha! ha!"

"Thank you, sir, I will be sure to come."

The man drove on, and Gerald, after buying some bread at a baker's near by, went back to his sister. They had a fine time over their frugal dinner. Child-like, they forgot the past trials in the present enjoyment. When they went back to their old seat at the door, Gerald saw the man and his two little boys pass again without any emotion whatever. The little good luck that had overtaken them had

brightened up the whole world. He even felt willing in the fullness of his content that his worthless father should live all his allotted days. He staid at home with Nellie all the afternoon. When evening came again, and the bright, beautiful moon had again started on her nightly journey, they went out together. Nellie had been so frightened the evening before that Gerald had resolved never to leave her alone again. So, hand in hand, they went out, almost unknowing and unknown, she without shawl or bonnet, he completely lost in the great straw hat that was continually slipping over his eyes.

They had proceeded about half the distance to Allynestreet, when Nellie suddenly started back, and, trembling all over, pointed out to her brother, in a dirty little room full of demijohns and glasses, a man who was dancing for the amusement of a row of bloated toppers, who were cheering him with much enthusiasm. Both children recognized their father. Nellie cried bitterly, but Gerald unconsciously set his teeth and shook his fist. They stood still for some moments anxiously beholding him, till the drunkard, becoming giddy, executed a series of remarkable pirouettes, and concluded his performance by falling flat on the floor and yelling out, at the top of his voice, the chorus of a drunken song. Two policemen, attracted by the uproar, now entered and bore him off in the sight of his children to the watch-house.

"I hope they'll keep him forever, and ever, and ever!" said Gerald. "Come sister, we'll have the house to ourselves to-night. Let's hurry on and go home by the wharf. 'Twill be light all night. I'll show you something funny."

Nellie not hearing him of course made no reply, but obeyed the impulse of his hand and hurried on. The moon grew brighter and brighter, the sky bluer and bluer, and two silver stars close together kept winking and winking at the two children as if they had some very pleasant thing to tell them. Sometimes the crowd of people jostled them a little,

and once Nellie fell down on a slippery crossing, but she was not hurt, and they proceeded merrily.

The water-carrier was standing in the door when they arrived.

"I was just looking for you," he said ; "you are so late I began to think you were not coming."

"Is it very late, sir?"

"Why, no, not for grown people, but most bedtime I should think for little folks like you."

"It is so light it seems like day."

"Yes ; the moon is full—it won't be dark to-night. Is your father at home?"

"No, sir. He has n't been home to-day."

Gerald's face flushed painfully as he thought of his father's present situation.

"And who takes care of you two when he is gone?"

"I take care of Nellie, sir, and not any body takes care of me."

"Poor boy ! what a shame !" said the man, laying his hand softly upon Nellie's golden hair. "But you're tired, and cold, and sick, and hungry sometimes. Bless me ! what do you do then?"

"I an't ever sick," replied Gerald, "because I'm so real stout I can't be, but sister Nellie often is. O, sir," continued the boy, whose heart was completely won by the water-carrier's interest in his affairs, "when she is sick, and her head aches so bad, and she grows so pale, we do n't never know what to do then!"

"Well, my lad, what do you do?"

"I hold her head still in my hands, and I put cold water on it to cool it, and then"—

He hesitated and colored as if ashamed to tell the rest.

"Out with it, my boy ; tell me what else can you do for her?"

"I kiss her often, for then she smiles and looks better."

"And feels better, too, I have n't a doubt. Is she sick often?"

"Yes, sir, every few days. Do you know, I think I am afraid sometimes."

"Afraid of what?"

"I'm afraid that she'll die and leave me. I've no body but her."

Nellie did not see the look of fond affection that he turned upon her, for she was wholly absorbed in watching the antics of a little white dog that was frolicking around them.

"O, sir," said Gerald, "I've seen a little girl in a coffin once. She was dead. She was not so big as Nellie. It was before—before we were so poor. And when Nellie looks like her, so pale and still, and when she looks like as mamma did before she died, I'm so afraid I can't help crying, sir!"

The little boy did not cry then, but the man's rough-bearded cheek was wet with tears.

"Ah, well! Never mind, my boy, you'll get along somehow if you try to be good. God will raise up friends for you. He takes care of the poor orphan children. Have you learned to love him yet? He is your Heavenly Father."

"Mamma used to talk about him. I've forgot what it was, though. She loved him and Nellie does, but I do n't."

"Why? Do n't you know it is wicked not to love God, not to pray to him?"

"I do pray to please Nellie, but let him bring back my mamma to take care of us, if he wants me to love him, else I sha' n't do it."

The boy spoke with much energy, as if he had thought often and bitterly of his early orphanhood. The man was puzzled how to reply to him.

"I remember your mother," he said, after a pause.

"Did you know mamma?" asked Gerald eagerly. "Isn't Nellie like her, only littler?"

"I think you are both like her. But she was not so bold as you are. She was very timid and gentle—very much

like your sister, I should think. I used to saw wood for your father when you and poor Nellie were babies. You were just alike then, and always dressed just alike. Could n't tell t' other from which."

"O, sir, will you please to tell us all you remember of mamma?" The boy's eyes shone with eagerness. "Did you know her always?"

"No, it is but little that I can tell you about her. Your father was rich, and was too proud then to look at such as me, but many and many a time has your mother sent me a warm dinner from the kitchen. She always looked pale and sorrowful-like. She was dressed always in white when I worked there in Summer time, and her hair was in long curls like hers."

He pointed to Nellie, who had sat down on the steps and had coaxed the little dog into her lap.

"Why! what am I thinking of? I did n't mean to keep you all night in the open air. The moonlight is so pleasant that I forgot, or did n't mind, which is the same thing. Come in, come in!"

He led the way up stairs and the two children followed. "Fido!" he called, and the little dog, to Nellie's great delight, came bounding up after them. They were ushered into a small room, which, though poorly furnished, had an air of neatness and comfort. A young woman sat on a low cricket by the window with a fat, happy-looking baby in her arms. A pale candle feebly contended with the bright moon rays that shone full into the room and cast a feeble glimmer upon the great piles of unfinished work on the table. Thimble, needles, thread, and wax were waiting patiently to be used, but the baby, like the babies in richer families, had a decided antipathy to seeing its mamma work, and a particular dislike to her doing the low-priced slop-work that she obtained from the stores. A little boy, perhaps a year older than Gerald, occupied the low window-seat. He was turning a book over and over in his hand, and was, much against his inclination, conning a lesson.

He was evidently an unwilling student, preferring a frolic with the baby or Fido to any book in the world, and his countenance pretty strongly expressed his opinion of literature in general, and of the book from which he was studying in particular. It was a primary geography, and a long-suffering and much-abused volume, for the corners of the leaves were bitten off or doubled down, and all the pretty pictures and maps had been recolored and obscured by juvenile taste and skill. Jamie was just now learning the boundaries of his native State, and wishing in his soul that New York had been an island, so that he could say it was surrounded by water and have it done with. The discontented expression of his face soon vanished, for the entrance of the children and his pet "Fido" gave an agreeable turn to his thoughts, and banished for the time all remembrance of the lesson.

"Well, Mary," said the man, "here's the boy I mentioned. Did you ever see such a rig as he has on? Don't you think that you can fix him up a little more decent?"

The young woman repressed by a great effort her inclination to laugh at the comical appearance of the child, and turned with pitying interest from him to his beautiful sister.

"And, Mary," continued her husband, "an't you got, somewheres or 'n other, a stray bit of a shawl or bonnet for this poor little lassie?"

"I do n't know, I'm sure. We can do very well for the boy. I've been looking over the clothes that Jamie has outgrown, and there is a whole suit scarcely worn at all. They'd be plenty good enough for Jamie to wear to school if he could get into them. They'll do nicely for this boy after he has been washed. I think he needs washing full as much as dressing," said Mary, now laughing aloud as her bright eyes scanned his attire more closely.

"But then, he can't help it, Mary," said her husband, reprovingly.

"I know it. Little boy, I did n't mean to laugh at you, but it seems to me that you ought to soak in running water

overnight, and go through the dumb Betty, to clean you up decent."

"Mary!"

"Well? Don't look so doleful. Nobody is hurt. The boy is n't scared or offended; he knows I'm going to fix him nicely. But the girl—now really, William, you are too inconsiderate. We are poor ourselves, and you bring in every day somebody to feed and dress. We can't help every body."

"I know it, Mary. I often fear our little purse will get too lank for comfort, but what else can we do? Here am I, with a strong hand and a willing heart to work for the dear ones that God has given me, and here are these poor children motherless, worse than fatherless, and not a friend in the world."

Tears began to dim Mary's bright eyes as she looked up admiringly into her husband's frank, benevolent face, and watched its expression as he talked.

"The little girl is deaf and dumb, Mary. Only think of our little Abby, now laughing and crowing all day—darling baby!—if she should, when as old as this one, come to need and be so friendless, would n't she want a warm heart like yours, Mary, to go to in her trouble?"

"I'm sure I'd help her if I could. Being willing and being able are two different things, if you could only once see the difference. There is n't an article of clothing in the house that she can wear, that's the plain fact, and there's no getting round it. She can't wear my dresses till she's ten years older, and your coats, which are generally an exact fit for every poor beggar in the city, won't do here. I declare," she added, laughing heartily, "I've been expecting you'd bring one out and try it on to her ever since she came in."

"Well done, Mary, one would think, from your account, that our being out of the alms-house ourselves was a standing miracle."

"Come here, my dear," said Mary, beckoning Nellie to-

ward her. "Ah, she's timid. Little boy, just lead your sister here, will you?"

The beauty of the child and the look of perfect confidence that she raised to Gerald's face, completely won the heart of the naturally-benevolent woman. She smoothed her long, beautiful ringlets with her hand, and, drawing her nearer, kissed her as her own mother might have done. Nellie was too shy to offer to return the caress, but the slight endearment filled her large blue eyes with tears and brightened her whole face with smiles.

"Here, William," said Mary, suddenly rising, "take the baby while I run into Mrs. Ellerton's. With her family of seven children she must have some sort of a dress to spare that will fit this one. Let the boy wash and dress himself. I'll be back directly."

She was gone before he could reply. Now that she was fairly enlisted in the cause William Cory gave himself no further anxiety. Gerald, assisted in his toilet by James, was soon arrayed in clean, coarse clothes, patched a little here and there, but of a cut and pattern suited to his years. Nellie clapped her hands and danced round the room in her joy at his transformation. She kissed the baby again and again in the exuberance of her glee. Yearning to embrace Gerald, she came very near hugging Jamie Cory by mistake. Jamie would n't have cared if she had.

Presently Mrs. Cory returned with a little bundle on her arm and her eyes sparkling with pleasure. She had been to three houses where she was acquainted, and had procured, by downright begging, quite an assortment of clothing for the deaf and dumb child. Much of it, however, was found on trial to be either too large or too small for her, but there was enough that fitted her to make up one neat suit. It did n't alter her looks as much as Gerald's had been changed by his. She seemed pleased when a little chip hat was tied on over her curls, but her enthusiasm was all for her brother. Neither of them seemed to think of the late hour till Mr. Cory proposed going home with them.

"It's too late," he said kindly, "for such little folks to be out alone."

"It is light, sir," replied Gerald, "and we an't afraid. We're used to going alone. Besides, we are going round by the wharf. I want to show Nellie something."

"Round by the wharf! Why, my boy, it's ten o'clock! No, no. You must go directly home, and I'll go with you to make sure. Do n't sit up, Mary. Come, little ones."

What a bright, pleasant night! So pure, so calm, so quiet! O, could it be, that there were thousands and thousands of desolate hearts in the great city? Could it be that wild and despairing eyes were raised hopelessly to the golden stars that looked down so lovingly?

The door of their miserable home stood wide open, just as they had left it hours before.

"Now, my boy," said their kind friend, as they stopped on the step, "what will you do to-morrow?"

"I can do errands now," said Gerald with much animation. "I shall be down to the depot when the cars come in, and somebody 'ill let me carry something, I know. And we've bread enough now for breakfast. If they'll only keep father away so that I may n't have to beg, we'll do well enough."

"Why, where is your father?"

"I do n't know, sir. We saw two men carry him away from a bad place, where he was singing and dancing, and a little black boy was playing on a fiddle. And father kicked, and screamed, and said, 'Let me alone, will you? I'm going home.' And one of the men said, 'Yes, my fine fellow, we'll give you a home till morning, perhaps longer.' It was when Nellie and me were coming to your house, this evening, and he an't been home all day."

"Too bad! it's too bad! and you and Nellie have been fretting yourselves half to death about him, I'll warrant."

"No, sir. We have n't worried a bit. If I only knew that he'd never come back," said the boy, "I'd be happy once, I would. I should n't care where they kept him, or

who got him," and his eyes flashed with passion as he shook his little fist, and added, "Let him strike Nellie again if he dares, sir!"

"Why, Gerald! what a little firebrand! why, he's your father, child!"

"I do n't care what he is! I hate him all over! You would n't like him to thrash *you*, and swear at *you*, and drive you into the streets at midnight to beg money to buy rum. You'd hate him, too, if poor Nellie was your sister and he beat her for nothing. I know you would."

"Well, well, my boy, I want you to be good. If you loved your kind Heavenly Father you could bear this better. You must n't get so angry. It's wicked. Be a brave boy and ask God to help you to love him. He'll take care of you and Nellie, if you ask him."

"Did God tell you to dress us?" asked the child.

"No; but he tells us to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, which is about the same thing, I take it."

"Tell me more about Him."

"Not to-night. It's time you were both sound asleep. If you do n't get any thing to do let me know when I come by with my cart to-morrow noon. God bless you both! Good-night."

Gerald and Nellie thought they could keep awake till morning, the night was so pleasant; but for all that they fell asleep as soon as they laid down—asleep in each other's arms, just as they had been cradled together in infancy, with no earthly protector, but with loving angels watching beside their hard pillows.

CHAPTER III.

“Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning
Back to their springs, like the rain shall fill them full of refreshment;
That which the fountain sends forth, returns again to the fountain.”

JOSEPH CAMERON, the father of Gerald, was a native of Edinburgh, Scotland. His father died before he was born, and his mother when he was a year old. Thus early orphaned, he was brought up by a maternal aunt till he was fifteen years old, and was so petted and indulged by her, that he became, of course, the chief torment of her life.

He was heir to a handsome property, under the guardianship of his uncle, who, therefore, did not consider it necessary that he should be accustomed to labor, and allowed him to grow up without once performing a useful action. The child, unfortunately for himself, was more than ordinarily beautiful in person, and, on account of his prepossessing looks alone, escaped many a punishment that a plainer child would have received, and which being denied to him, had no slight influence in early maturing the selfishness that was a prominent trait in his character. It was not thought possible, by his mistaken relatives, that one so beautifully endowed by nature could be subject to the passions and vices of common children.

The nursery maids held to a different opinion in regard to him.

Jane, in particular, whose hair *would* curl naturally and very prettily too, had a special dislike to the boy-tyrant, whose recreation, during the hours devoted to his toilet, was to pull and twist the aforementioned ringlets into interminable and unimaginable tangles, or slyly to clip off a stray

curl with a pair of sharp scissors that he wore for that amiable purpose.

"And ye're a strong-headed thing!" said poor Jane one morning, when quite provoked out of her wits by his perverse behavior. "The devil himself can't bato ye!"

"What d'ye say, Irish Jinny?" said the boy, pinching her arm cruelly, as she stooped to tie the ribbon of his collar.

"Say? I say I'd like to shake the pluck out of ye!" replied the chambermaid, who was half crying with anger and pain. "Ye unfeelin' hound! Talk of your beauty, indade! And shure, ye're the ugliest imp in seven countries!"

"I'll bite you!" retorted Joe, approaching her for that purpose.

But, instead of accomplishing his threat, he received from the roused and indignant girl a blow on the side of his head that made him distinctly hear a vast number of little bells all chiming together.

Jane lost her place for this little rash act of discipline, and a more submissive underling, whose hair did n't curl, was substituted.

Joseph did not improve in temper as he grew older. Petted and spoiled in the drawing-room, with no constraint put upon his passions and inclinations, it is not surprising that every servant in the establishment absolutely hated him. They, poor ignorant creatures, could not understand why his beauty should be an apology for his overweening self-conceit and selfishness; and his abusive language to themselves was none the more pleasing to their ears because it was uttered by lips chiseled to the finest lines of grace and symmetry.

A few slight but futile attempts were made to educate the boy at home. He was deaf to all their representations of the future respectable position that he must hold in society.

"What will people say of you, love?" said his aunt to him one day, after an hour spent in useless coaxing. "They'll call you a dunce."

"Who cares if they do? When I'm a man I'll do as I like—just as I do now."

"Now, Joey, darling, study just ten minutes. I'll get your uncle to get a new horse for you. Just ten minutes. It will soon be over, and we'll put the book away, then, till to-morrow."

"No, I sha' n't, I shall have the horse any way. There's Jim Anderson coming to go after birds' eggs with me."

Every attempt to induce the boy to learn ended in a similar manner. It was in vain to think of educating him at home. So at the age of fifteen he was placed at school with an express charge to the teacher to give him his own way, and on no account whatever to suffer him to be punished.

Years rolled by, and his education was pronounced finished. He left school just twenty years old, polished for life. He went immediately into society and was greatly admired. If he had been poor he would have been called a handsome fool, but being rich, many a far-seeing mamma spoke flatteringly of the elegant Mr. Cameron.

He was a dandy of the first water; wore diamond rings and scented gloves; sported a straggling mustache; bowed as gracefully as his dancing-master; danced *almost* as prettily as a monkey; smoked a cigar, and tossed off a glass of wine with charming ease and quickness, and was in short a regular-born exquisite.

When a lad it had been a never-wearying amusement with him to worry kittens, to frighten birds, or to work by the hour at impaling flies and bugs on a long slender wire, but manhood required nobler recreations, and now his favorite sport was in training unfortunate roosters to tear each other in pieces, and in attending horse-races.

He was just twenty-two years old when he took it into his head to come to the United States. He had come into the possession of his property, and also into the possession of the idea that it would be pleasant, as well as genteel, to travel for pleasure. He was accompanied to America by a

young friend, the Jim Anderson of his bird-nesting days. Jim had graduated at a University, and prided himself upon, what none of his friends suspected, the poetry of his nature. He came to the New World "to behold Nature on a large scale." Cameron, more moderate in his aspirations, wanted only "to have a little fun with the natives."

His friend's wish was realized first. Before they were half-way across the wide Atlantic he gave up, without a murmur, all his romantic visions of vast prairies, interminable forests, and lakes a size smaller than the ocean, and took passage home in the first vessel that sailed from New York after his arrival. But Cameron staid to have his "fun with the natives."

There was a great aunt of his, a widow lady, who had come with her family to America before he was born, and who was still living in the little inland town of L. His uncle had intrusted him with a message and a gift for her, but he suffered nearly a year to glide by without attempting a visit. In the mean time he had familiarized himself with many a dark haunt of vice, and had displayed his fine person in the ball-rooms and theaters, and on the public promenades, till he was tired of all the world, or, as he expressed it, "thoroughly bored." So he determined, just for variety's sake, to attend to the errand intrusted to him, and to spend a week or two in hunting up his country cousins.

He arrived at the old lady's residence on a pleasant evening in Summer, just as the family were sitting down to tea. He was cordially welcomed by all as soon as he introduced himself, and affectionately received by the old lady, who soon traced in his features a likeness to his grandmother, the fair Helen Ross, who long years before had wedded her only brother, and became, as the old lady expressed it, a choice bairn of their family flock.

The young man's pride was flattered as he noticed the impression made by his fine looks upon the younger part of the company. He exerted himself to appear agreeable:

He related, in a free-and-easy, off-hand manner, little incidents connected with his voyage, or of his stay in New York, and then, as he noticed the absorbing interest that was inspired by the slightest allusion to his native country, he indulged in descriptive sketches of Scotland and of the old homestead, till, ceasing to wonder at their rapt attention, he began to think it strange that he had never before appreciated the excellences that he was so eloquently portraying. There was an affable air of condescension in his manner that at first rather grated upon the feelings of his stanch republican cousins, but no one was disposed to find fault.

The family consisted of the old lady, a widowed daughter, and three grandchildren. The two eldest were fine, hearty young men, with intellectual faces, expressive of highly-cultivated minds. The youngest was a lame girl, very fair, with a sweet, happy expression of countenance, and a form so wasted by disease as to seem almost spiritual in its fragile lightness. She was, evidently, rapidly hastening to the silent city of the dead. They all knew this, and yet so gradual had been her decline, that all, saving herself, still deluded themselves by putting far into the dim future the sad day of parting.

It was a loving, happy family ; not fashionable perhaps, for they were untrammelled by the empty forms of the gay world, but they were, what is far better, affectionate and polite in all their intercourse with each other. The gray-haired grandmother smiled joyously in their midst ; she scarcely felt the heavy burden of many years, so peacefully had the serene evening of life stolen upon her.

In their way of living they made no pretensions to style. They were plain, substantial farmers, nothing more. All their quiet pleasures and the simplest arrangements of their rural home betokened true refinement. When God gave them wealth, its possession made no difference in their way of living or in their occupations ; it only enlarged the measure of their bounty to the poor and destitute. Yet their unpre-

tending home had its luxuries and beauties. A large, well-stocked bookcase, with glass doors, occupied one corner of the parlor, and a fine piano stood opposite to it. A portrait of John Knox looked sternly down from its ancient black frame on the wall, and as the setting sun shone full upon its face, the old Scottish reformer seemed to be gloomily eying the fashionable young reprobate from his own native land. Fresh flowers ornamented the tea-table, and the vines that crept up the pillars of the portico and overhung the windows, were traced in every delicate variety of shadow upon the plain carpet that covered the floor.

The view from the house was somewhat tame, presenting an almost unbroken stretch of green fields, only relieved here and there by clumps of trees or low velvety hills, or by the dwellings and spacious outhouses of the neighboring farmers. The whole place wore an air of cheerful beauty and freshness, to which even Joseph Cameron was not wholly insensible.

There was another charm—a strange and wonderful charm to one so heartless—a charm wholly independent of the scenery. It was a young girl, a visitor. She was scarcely absent a moment from Annie's couch, but at tea she sat beside his cousin Allan. She was very timid, and when introduced to him had not once raised her eyes. It was impossible to tell in what her chief loveliness consisted, for it seemed to change with every varying blush and smile; but, whatever it was, it bewitched Joseph Cameron completely. She sat by Allan's side as if he were her brother. It was easy to see in his tender, but respectful manner, in his earnest, affectionate looks, in what light he regarded her, and how deeply his yet unspoken love for her had taken root in his heart; for Allan had not yet asked her to become his bride. He desired more than the affection of a sister ere she became his own forever. So he waited patiently, hopeful in his belief that no other image filled the young heart he so desired to win.

Sweet Lucy Clare was the only child of a farmer in

moderate circumstances, who lived about five miles from L. She had become acquainted with Annie Lewis while learning a milliner's trade in the village. The wide difference in the worldly fortune, and in the position of the two families, had not been suffered to interrupt their intercourse, and now, since all felt sadly that the days of Annie Lewis were numbered, she had been almost constantly with her. It was Annie's earnest wish that, when she departed, the friend so loved should take her place as a daughter by the fireside, and all desired, though none as yet breathed the wish, that Allan should win for his bride the lovely but portionless one, whose artless graces had won all hearts.

Cameron soon understood all this; he saw the rich love, the fond hopes involved, and yet, with the quick readiness of malice, resolved to obey the promptings of self-love, and, if possible, to win her for himself. He had a long struggle with his pride ere he decided to marry her; for he saw plainly that she was not to be obtained as a beautiful toy, trifled with, tarnished, and then thrown aside. And he thought, too, that his love for her, so different from his previous attachments to the painted belles of the city, would last fresh and bright forever.

When, after a few days, Allan saw her eye kindle and her cheek glow at the approach of his handsome cousin, and marked the devotion of the young man, he buried his first love deep in his heart and devoted himself with new assiduity to the comfort of his declining sister. When, at the end of a month of torture, he learned that Cameron was to make gentle Lucy his wife, he thanked God that betrayal and ruin had not, as he had feared, come upon her. For a few days only did his brave heart give way—a few days only did he spend in silence and alone—and then he came forth firm in his noble manhood, purified and elevated by suffering, to be the stay of his widowed parent and the prop of the dear old grandmother's failing years.

One night—it was the night after the wedding—he was watching by his sister while his mother slept, and was plac-

ing her in an easier posture on her couch, when she suddenly clasped her arms around his neck and burst into tears.

"Hush, Annie, dear;" he said, soothingly, not knowing what to make of her emotion, "do you feel worse? Did I not move you easily? There, love," and he gently disengaged her arms, and carefully laid her back upon the pillows, "do not weep. Tell me how I hurt you."

"It is for you, dear Allan," sobbed the poor girl, "I'm so sorry for you. You are so noble and good, I can not bear to think how you are tried."

He did not speak, but she felt the great hot tears that fell on her forehead, as he bent lovingly over her. Presently, with his sweet, grave manner quite restored, he kissed her cheek. When he spoke his voice was even cheerful.

"Do not fear for me, dear Annie. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. I find all the comfort I need in him. I shall pass through the fire unhurt. But you, love, what shall I do to amuse you—to make the night less tedious? Shall I read?"

"Sing to me, Allan; some of the old pieces that we used to sing together."

"Yes, Annie. Shall I play?"

"If you please."

He opened the piano and drew out the music-stool, then turning to her, asked cheerfully, "Well, sister, what shall I sing?"

"'There is a land of peaceful rest.' Do you remember it?"

He replied by touching the keys lightly. He was passionately fond of music, and sung as he played with much skill and feeling. The sacred melody soon soothed into calm serenity the troubled feelings that his sister had awakened afresh, and as he sung the almost heavenly songs that Annie suggested, his very soul seemed inspired with the glorious theme—the rest that remains for the people of God. At last Annie slept, and Allan, after waking his mother

to consign his precious charge to her care, retired to his chamber to seek for himself the grateful refreshment of sleep. A week from that night Annie died.

Was the bride happy? How could her fond parents so easily give up their earthly idol to the possession of a stranger? They were dazzled by his wealth, and were secretly much elated that their darling child had made so brilliant a match.

It was not till she was fairly established as the mistress of one of the most elegant mansions of the city that her unhappy destiny became apparent. Then all intercourse with her relatives and friends was sternly interdicted. Cameron was determined to "begin right," he said. He was n't going to have his fashionable associates meet at his table "such country boors as her father and mother." He would n't have such a circumstance possible.

Ah, how soon the fair bride awoke from her short dream of love and happiness, to find herself the beautiful slave of a heartless tyrant! But she could not bring herself at once to comprehend the baseness of his character. She could not or would not for a long time see the entire selfishness of his nature; she could not bear to erase so suddenly the bright image of perfection that love had traced upon her heart. She would wait patiently. She began to fear as well as to love him. In a few short months she had learned to tremble at the sound of his step approaching, but the buoyant hopes of youth and innocence are not easily crushed, and she hoped on—hoping ever that it was but a thin cloud that cast such dread shadows around her, and that the clear sunlight would surely shine brightly again.

O, how often her poor tired heart longed for a mother's deathless love! How often she dreamed of clasping her arms around her mother's neck, and, as in the happy days of childhood, freely relating all her sorrows! So true and lifelike were her visions, that she often felt as if her mother's ready sympathy in her trials followed her through the day.

Gentle Lucy Cameron never once dreamed of opposing her husband's wishes. In obedience to his command, she had written to her parents that she must never see them more ; that all through life she must be to them as if she had never been ; that Cameron was ashamed of her lowly birth, and that they could now best show their love for her by never seeking her—never inquiring for her welfare. The cruel words were scarcely legible, for the letter was blistered with her tears, but there was not a murmur of complaint in it to tell them that her heart was breaking.

They had been three years married, when one evening in June they were surprised by a call from Allan Lewis. Cameron was just leaving his room to go to his favorite club, when his servant announced his cousin's arrival.

"Show him into the parlor, Tom," he said ; "tell him I'll be down directly. By George ! I'll finish this cigar first," he added, as Tom went out. "What the deuce has sent him here ? Confound him ! Perhaps he wants to see if Lucy looks happy. I'll bet a pound she'll be glad to see him ! 'T would be just like her, now, as much as I have plagued her about his old love for her. I heard he'd moved to town. I an't going to have him hanging around here, making Lucy think she's abused and all that kind of stuff, taking messages from her to the old folks and bringing skim-milk cheeses back. No, I'll be bound that Allan Lewis won't come here in a hurry again !"

Allan Lewis had been three months married. Contrary to the doctrine of all romances, but in accordance with the every-day experience of life, he had loved again. His wife was a clergyman's daughter, and as a matter of course brought no wealth as her marriage dower, but Allan was contented. She was not like his early love—remarkable for loveliness of person, but she added to the sweet disposition and graceful timidity of fair Lucy Clare the richer gifts of genius and piety.

They had come to reside in the city, in the same street

with Cameron, and it seemed but natural to renew their old friendship.

When Allan entered his cousin's parlor, he found—as he at first supposed—that no one was there, but presently his attention was attracted by a burst of childish laughter, and, looking in the direction of the sound, he saw through the open glass doors two children frolicking on the grass plat, and rolling and tumbling each other about as if all the fun in the world was concentrated in the hard thumps and frequent falls that they encountered. Near them, and just inside the door, sat Lucy on a low ottoman, apparently watching their play, and half hidden by the long waving curls that Allan so well remembered. Her thin, white hands were clasped upon her knee, and as she raised her eyes from her children to the blue, cloudless sky above, Allan read the long volume of her life's misery in that one beseeching glance.

"Mrs. Cameron!" he said softly.

She sprang from her seat with a sudden cry of joy, and before he could utter a word she had clasped his extended hand in both of hers.

"O, Allan! dear Allan! speak! quick! tell me that they are well—my own dear father and mother! Surely, Allan, you have not come with bad tidings," she said hurriedly and becoming very pale. "For pity's sake, do not say that any evil has befallen them!"

She spoke so eagerly, and he was so at a loss to understand her emotion, that he hardly knew how to reply, but he assured her that her parents were quite well when he last saw them.

"But do you not see them often, or hear from them?" he asked in a surprised tone.

"I've had no means of hearing from them since I was married. O, Allan, do not mention it."

"But, Lucy"—

"Hush! He's coming! I hear his steps on the stairs."

"Why, how you tremble!"

of the boys around. Naturally fearless, he often thought it would be fine sport to repay a provoking taunt with a profusion of kicks and blows, but it would distress Nellie, and must not, therefore, be thought of.

How often, in his ignorance of filial duty, did he fancy some good time coming, when he could safely return both principal and interest for the many beatings that he had received !

CHAPTER IV.

"That ebon urn saith more than thousand homilies."

THE sultry Summer came with its fervid breath and its usual succession of long days of almost unendurable heat, tempered occasionally by refreshing showers. Not a breath of pure air came into the dirty streets and foul alleys, or into the close houses where gross vice and crime and innocent misfortune had crowded their victims.

It was Summer—so glorious and beautiful in the open country that God has created! so much to be dreaded in the pent-up dwellings that man's ingenuity has huddled together, where the foul, fetid atmosphere reeks with disease and death! God help the pale little children sweltering on the hot, filthy sidewalks! God in mercy aid the poor people, stricken down by mortal sickness, and in their delirium raving of cool, gushing fountains, of the sparkling blue air, of the sweet-scented clover fields, and the long lines of green foliage in the shadowy old forest, and then awaking to inhale the rank vapors a thousand times breathed over, and the pestilential stench of the festering gutters by the door!

God pity the poor *now*, for the pitiless Winter, with its keen hunger, and biting cold, and utter destitution, is far, far preferable to this!

Very many died in the street where Cameron lived. Not a day passed during the month of July without a funeral; and the voice of wailing and woe was blended with the profane murmurs that continually offended the ear of Heaven!

Gerald was several times ill, and Nellie had twice, for a week at a time, been confined to her little straw bed. Good

William Cory often looked in upon them, when sure that Cameron was absent, and he was always the bearer of some little delicacy, prepared with motherly thoughtfulness by Mary. By his advice Gerald and his sister spent as much of their time as possible abroad in a more healthy part of the city. They were always welcome at his house, and he often procured light jobs or errands for Gerald to do while Nellie staid in safety with his wife. On such occasions Gerald was almost too happy to work. To escape abuse he must somehow procure money for his father, who, if it was only forthcoming, never inquired if it was begged or borrowed, earned or stolen.

It was not a mere pittance that the child generally carried home at night. Very often the people who employed him made him trifling presents, and it was a common occurrence for him to be overpaid for his willing labor. He was never careless, and his ready activity and earnest desire to please procured for him many patrons. It seemed to him that he must be growing very fast, and he measured himself with a string every night and morning to see how near he was to being a man.

September came—golden-haired September! rich in luscious fruits and a bounteous harvest! smiling pleasantly and genially even upon the discomfort and dust of the city!

During the whole Summer Joseph Cameron had not been once really sober; there had not been an hour when his head had been wholly clear of the fumes of liquor. He became more and more fierce in his disposition, more reckless in his cruelty, and, if it were possible, more violently abusive to his children. He beat Nellie as often as Gerald now, and would come raving home in the middle of the night and pounce upon them with the fury of a tiger. He had at last sunk to the lowest dregs of society, and there was scarcely a dark den or haunt of iniquity in the whole city, with which he was not acquainted. The meanest of his neighbors felt themselves contaminated by his presence;

he was loathed and despised by those who were fast following in the very road that he had chosen, and one and all agreed that it was a miracle that the poor orphans were among the living.

William Cory had felt for some time very uneasy about them, when, passing by one morning, he saw Nellie, pale as death, rush into the street, and Gerald, who was thrust violently out after her, sit down almost senseless upon the rough pavement. Without further hesitation he applied to the proper authorities, who gave him permission to remove the children to his own house.

The same night Cameron was conveyed to the hospital, and in three days died of delirium tremens. The agony of his last hours was fearful to behold. To his distempered imagination, perhaps in reality, the room appeared full of evil spirits, frightful fiends, who tormented him with their impatience to drag him away. It certainly seemed that "hell from beneath was moved to meet him at his coming."

It required five strong men to hold him, and then he would often free himself and rush wildly about the room, his eyes glaring with horror, and almost bursting from their sockets. He performed feats impossible to other men, springing, in his terror, from one article of furniture to another, balancing himself upon the bedposts, and all the time writhing and twisting to avoid the huge fiery serpents that, he asserted, filled the corners of the room. Sometimes they were twining about his neck, and he made almost superhuman efforts to tear them off; sometimes he shrieked as he felt their cold, slimy touch beneath the bed-clothes. It was a dreadful scene, even to the accustomed eyes of his attendants.

"There! Look there!" pointing his shaking finger at the open fireplace, "now will ye believe it? He is coiled for a spring! His eyes are on fire! Do you hear him hiss? Do you see his burning tongue? O!" and with a screech that froze the blood of his attendants, he sprang *into the bed* and buried his head in the blankets. The bed

shook for a moment as if itself seized with a spasm of terror, then all was still, and the shivering spectators knew that the impure spirit of Joseph Cameron stood before his Maker.

Gerald and Nellie, attired in neat but humble mourning, and accompanied by their kind friends, followed the corpse of their father to his last earthly resting-place.

It was a solemn sight. The burial service was read, the dust committed to its fellow-dust, but no tear moistened the sod that hid his face forever from their sight. There was no regret in the loving glances of the orphans as they stood by the open grave, with their arms closely entwined around each other.

"They could n't have been expected, poor things," said Mr. Cory to his wife, "to grieve themselves to death, but how strange it looked, and what a mournful thing it is, after all, to die, and have nobody to care at all, except to be glad!"

"Yes, I know; but, William, it seems so much worse to think he's gone without a prayer or a word of repentance, with all his sins upon his head."

It was the night after the funeral, and the kind-hearted couple sat up talking a long time after the children were asleep. True Christians as they both were, Mary could not help, at times, expressing a little anxiety about the future; yet, whenever she succeeded in infusing any of her own doubts and cares into her husband's mind, she always went resolutely to work to clear them all out again. They had till now, by hard labor and close economy, barely contrived to keep out of want; they had always been liberal beyond the extent permitted by worldly prudence and selfishness, but not beyond the broader requirements of God's law; and the question that now embarrassed Mary was, not how to secure more of personal ease and comfort, but how to provide for the twin orphans without wronging their own dear children.

"I can't tell how 't will be done," said her husband, "but

I'm certain sure, Mary, the Lord will provide a way somehow, I han't no doubt on 't. Only let us keep cheery, and do our best, and look steadily to the Lord for help. It 'll all come out right. It don't look like duty any-way, to turn these pretty little ones into the street to starve, now, does it, Mary?"

"They'd be better off than they were before their father died, any where. Gerald is so bright and active that I dare say they'd get along. They'd keep from starving. But they need seeing to in other ways besides feeding them. Gerald has been in bad company too long already."

Her manner implied so much more than her words, that he asked hastily,

"Why, what do you mean, Mary?"

"I mean that he's learned plenty of evil already; 't would be strange, though, if he had n't. I declare," said Mary, raising her voice a little, and speaking rapidly, "I declare, if you look so solemn, Will, I'll have the bell tolled. The child an't quite lost yet. I was n't going to tell you that he's a hopeless case, but quite contrary—something that will please you when you've heard it all. So, now, just smile if you can, or I won't speak again to-night." He was smiling already at her earnestness.

"Well, Mary, what is it?"

"To-night, when you were out, after tea, the children were all sitting on the stairs together. Gerald had the baby in his arms, and was talking to Jimmie, who was playing, as he always is, with Nellie's long curls. I knew he was telling about their troubles, poor child, but being busy, I did not pay much attention. At last I heard Nellie's name and something about a picture of his mother, and then I knew, by his voice, that he was very angry. So I laid down my work and went to the top of the stairs to listen. He was so strange; I can't tell. For all he was in such a passion, and was using the worst language I ever heard from a child, he'd stop every moment to kiss his sister, who had her hands clasped around his neck, and was looking very sad at his

angry face. Then our Jamie whispered something in his ear, and he changed directly, and burst into tears. You know he hardly ever cries. Nellie looked so distressed at this new turn of affairs, that Jamie, half crying himself, seemed to be at a loss what to say or do, so I called them all in, and, putting baby in the cradle, I sent Jamie down for coal, and then, calling Gerald to me, I inquired what was the matter. I never saw such a child. I could n't feel a bit angry with him, although his language had been so shocking, and before our Jamie, too. Well, I had to ask him a number of times, for he sobbed so that he could not speak.

"'I got so mad that I forgot,' he stammered out at last.

"'Forgot what?' said I.

"'That it was wicked to say bad words; and Jamie said, 'Did I know his father and mother would be grieved.' O, ma'am, are you very sorry?' he asked.

"'I could n't help crying too, William.

"'I'm sorry, my dear child,' I replied, 'because it is wicked and a great sin against your good Father in heaven, who has put it into our hearts to love you and Nellie, and take care of you. But you'll soon learn never to forget how wrong such language is, and if you pray earnestly to God to help you, I think you'll forget all the bad words, and perhaps you'll even forget to be angry, too. Will you try?'

"'His face was bright again in a moment, and he promised cheerfully. And then I talked to him about his poor, miserable father, till his feelings toward him softened, and he expressed his sorrow for his untimely and hopeless death. O, William, there's a great deal of good in that child yet. He'll almost earn his living, I dare say. He's a smart little bit at doing chores; and he'll get older and stronger every day.'

"'And we will take care of them till something better turns up. That is decided, isn't it, Mary?'

"It is decidedly time to go to bed, I should think," she replied, and without any answer at all, William was satisfied ; and as his pretty wife bustled about here and there, preparing for the early breakfast, she appeared, to his admiring eyes, like an angel of mercy.

CHAPTER V.

“Fair rose the dewy moon and the myriad stars;
But within doors
Brighter than these shone the faces of friends
In the glimmering lamp-light.”

GERALD had lived with his kind protector nearly a month, when one morning, as he was walking with Nellie, his attention was attracted by a funeral procession. It was no strange sight, for such scenes had been so frequent during the Summer, that their occurrence awakened no emotion in the spectator; yet Gerald was sensible of an unusual interest as he saw it turning down the street toward them.

There was no pomp of woe, no costly display of grief, no rich trappings or elegant carriages to denote that the departed one had ranked among the great ones of the earth; it was plainly one from the poor and humble walks of society who was now about to be committed to the dust.

In the carriage following the hearse sat a little girl, who was immediately recognized by Gerald as the child whose flowers had been destroyed by the reprobate monkey. It was not difficult to guess that she was following to the grave the dear mother for whom those flowers were gathered. By her side sat a middle-aged man, and two women occupied the opposite seat. She was not weeping, though her red and swollen eyes betrayed traces of recent tears, but she was very pale, and sat perfectly still, as if her grief had exhausted itself.

Gerald saw the man turn his head often and look anxiously in her face, and he fancied that he discovered in his sun-burnt features a slight likeness to her.

They kept up with the carriage but a short distance, for

Nellie was tired; so they sat down on a door-step, in a shady recess, and watched them till they were out of sight.

Gerald could think of nothing else all day. He had been strangely interested in the poor child at their former meeting, but his own troubles had nearly banished her from his recollection. He puzzled himself all day with wondering where she would now live, or if she would be very sorrowful and lonely, or if the kind-looking man by her side was her uncle, or some one on whom she could rely. It never occurred to him that he might be her father.

In the evening he told his friends about her—about the flowers and the monkey, and about the strange, kind gentleman who only made fun of him.

"He could n't help it, I'm sure," said Mary, laughing heartily herself at the remembrance of his muddy plight, when he first came to their house. "I suppose he took you for a little old man, or a mummy. He'd never know you if he should see you again," said Mary, with a pleased look at the neat attire that her care had provided for him.

"I should know him, though, any where. I could pick him out among a thousand, he had such queer, twinkling eyes, and such a hearty, great voice, as if he was real stout inside. He talked to me and the little girl as if we were a mile off."

"Perhaps if you had n't hurried off he would have given you something handsome," said Jamie.

"I would n't have touched it if he had," said the boy, reddening.

"Take care, Gerald!" and Mary raised her finger warningly.

"I was n't going to speak bad words, ma'am. I have n't once since—that night. But it was too bad for him to laugh so at what I could n't help. It was mean. It can't be very wicked, aunty," said Gerald, hesitating, "if I do wish sometimes that he might fall into that mud-hole himself, and see how *he* likes it."

"Never mind, Gerald. I dare say he's forgotten all

about it long ago, and you must only remember his kindness to the poor child."

Gerald dreamed of the little girl that night, and his visions shaped themselves in accordance with his wishes; for he thought her dead mother was alive and well, and that it was only by such mistakes as are common in the world of dreams, that she had ever been counted among the departed ones.

For a day or two, as he was running of errands in different parts of the city, he stared at every little girl he met, hoping to meet her again; but he was always disappointed, and gradually forgot to watch for her.

Nellie had grown plump and rosy in the new atmosphere of love in which she now lived, and an expression of real childish merriment shone in her large blue eyes and played in dimples on her cheek. Jamie declared that she was prettier than the baby, and this was a great admission for him to make. He began, as they all did, to understand her looks and gestures and to communicate with her. She was a pet with all, and Mrs. Cory asserted that she was the best child in the world and gave the least trouble.

"If she could only be educated," she said to Mrs. Ellerton, a coarse but good-hearted woman, who lived near and who had always taken a great interest in the child.

"Educated! and what, pray, would be the use? She'll learn housework and sewing from you, Mrs. Cory. She hems nicely now, and there's no airthly use in a girl's knowing any more. I've got six girls, but the gracious! you do n't catch this child edicatin' them!"

"Indeed!"

"You see *me*, Mrs. Cory. Well, I was educated—spent nine months, when I was young, at the best cemetery in New York. It never did a bit of good. I did n't want to go, and mother thought it was foolish, but father was always a lecturer about improving the women, and somehow he'd got the foolish notion into his head that to make them better they must be always a studying."

"So you went to school?" said Mary, beginning to feel interested in this scrap of her neighbor's autobiography.

"Yes, I went. I had to. The old man was one of the stagnacious sort and would n't give in. But you may take my experience for 't, Mrs. Cory. Money spent in edicatin' girls is like water spilt on the ground. Now, I've got one boy, Tom. *He's* going to be educated. *He's* going through college, if I live. But the girls will get their larning at home."

"Well, you'll be sure to make good housekeepers of them, Mrs. Ellerton," replied Mary, pleasantly.

"Mayhap, it's none of my business what you do, Mrs. Cory, but *I'd* never send *that* pretty little creature to school, I know!"

"Well, well, we shall do nothing at present, we can't afford it; she could n't go to a common school, you know. I often think," said Mary as she drew Nellie near to her and kissed her cheek, "I often think if she could only read and write, poor thing, it would be like hearing and speaking to her."

Gerald found time every day to go out with Nellie. He had heard Mr. Cory remark that exercise in the open air would bring the roses to her cheeks, if any thing would, and he always got a spare hour to devote to her. Often before the city began to wake up in the morning, they were hurrying hand in hand over the empty sidewalks, watching the opening of the stores, and laughing as the sleepy servants stuck their uncombed heads out of the attic windows for a breath of fresh morning air. Nellie was so bright and joyous on these occasions, that he always felt it a pity to return. Her beautiful hair fell almost to the bottom of her frock, and her little straw hat just shaded the soft blue eyes that he thought so lovely. She was timid and still in a crowd, but in the early morning, before the crowd got up, she was as gleeful and active as a bird.

One morning they were returning from a longer walk than usual, when Nellie's attention was attracted by a dis-

play of toys in the window of a shop, and they stopped to look in.

A gentleman was standing in the door waiting for a little chubby fellow to select a plaything. As the children came up he started back as if greatly surprised, at the same time exclaiming aloud, "Why, little Lucy! Is it possible?"

"Her name is n't Lucy, sir. It's Ellen. Ellen Cameron, sir, but we call her Nellie."

"Ah, yes, I know," said the gentleman. "Should you like one of these toys, my dear?" he asked, seeing that her eyes could not be coaxed away from them.

"She can't speak, sir," said Gerald, putting his arm round her as he replied. "She never did talk any, and she can't hear either. But if you please, sir, I can make her know what you say."

"In a minute, my dear. Tell me first what your own name is."

"Gerald. I'm her brother, sir."

"Why, yes. I know that, of course. And where do you live?"

"At Mr. Cory's, since father died."

Allan Lewis was much shocked. "Dead! is it possible that he is dead?"

"Was he your friend?" asked Gerald, beginning to eye the stranger a little suspiciously.

"I was his friend, my boy. I can't say that he had much friendship for me. But I've hunted the city over a dozen times lately to discover some trace of him. When did he die?"

"It was four weeks last night, sir. He died in a hospital."

"What was the matter with him?"

"I'd rather not tell, if you please, sir."

Allan marked with surprise the sudden flush that overspread the boy's face, and replied, "Ah, well, it is no matter. I see you think I ask more questions than a stranger should. But your father, Gerald, was my cousin,

and so it is n't strange that I want to know something about him and you too. I knew him and your dear mother a long time ago, before you were born, Gerald."

The boy's eyes sparkled with delight. "Then I'm sure, sir," he said, "you'll help us. We live at Mr. Cory's. They were our friends when father was crazy and cruel before he died. They took us away from him, and they love us as no one else has since mamma died. But, O sir, they're poor—too poor, I know, to take care of us and Jamie and little Abby besides. I'm sure, sir," he said earnestly, "that you'll tell me some way to earn money enough so that Nellie and me won't be a cost to them."

There was something so noble in the boy's manner, a thoughtfulness and energy so unusual to his years, that Allan was affected to tears, and turned hastily away to hide his emotion.

"Have I vexed you, sir?"

"No, no; but a little fellow like you to talk of supporting a family! It is ridiculous, Gerald!" he said, smiling pleasantly.

"I'm not so very little," urged the boy, with a deprecating look. "I can work. I *do* work now, and I'm getting bigger and stouter every day. It won't be long before I'll be large and strong—strong as iron," said the child, standing on tiptoe to look taller.

"Yes, yes, I'm sure you will, and we'll see what can be done for you. But, Gerald, do your grandparents know where you are?"

The child looked bewildered.

"I mean your mamma's father and mother. You have n't forgotten your mamma, Gerald?"

"O no, sir, but I did n't know—she never told us of them. I guess they are dead, too, for mamma said that I, and nobody else, was to see to Nellie."

"And so you never knew that out in the green country, away down in Rosedale, you've got the kindest of parents living yet? Poor Lucy! I understand why she never told

you. Why, Gerald, your grandmother will half lose her wits for joy when she sees you, and she'll be just the careful mother that Nellie needs."

"Are you sure," asked Gerald, hesitating, "that she *is* our grandmother?"

"Sure? I rather think I am. I saw her only last week, and she was very anxious to hear from you both. I've been searching for your father ever since, that I might be able to carry her some tidings of her sweet Lucy's orphans. So you can give up all care for the present. You are both provided for, and you can let your young bright eyes get a little older before they pry into the serious business of life. Harry!" he called, as the little boy came out at last, with a small drum suspended from his neck, and a tin trumpet in his mouth, "Harry, these are your cousins. Come and see them."

Harry looked up roguishly and blew a stunning blast on his trumpet, drumming an accompaniment in the strangest of musical time. He was about three years old, shaped very much like a round ball, all the way of a bigness, and was the impersonation of mischief itself. Such, at least, had been his mother's account of him from the first hour that he could wag about without aid.

"Now, Harry," said his father, "I want you to come and kiss these new cousins. Come, now, like a little man."

Harry still held back, so Mr. Lewis reached out his hand to draw him forward. The little fellow had no thought of closing his sport so abruptly. He trotted off a few paces, just out of his father's reach, and, facing about, blew and drummed with greater energy than before. The bystanders laughed, and Allan could not help smiling himself at the odd appearance of the child. It was a task of no small difficulty to get the playthings away so as to have them wrapped up to send home, for little Harry was so enchanted with his music that he insisted on going directly to play to his mamma.

"Mamma will be delighted, no doubt," said Mr. Lewis, laughing himself at the bare thought of the din about to be raised in the nursery, and, perchance, in the library or parlor, "but you need not hurry so. I'm sure she'll be willing to wait till you come."

Harry finally submitted, on condition that he should carry the toys home himself. Still he could not be induced to bestow any of his regards upon his newly-found relatives; he could think of nothing aside from his music. He was just a trifle spoiled.

Mr. Lewis wished to take the children directly home. He had a carriage in waiting, and proposed to Gerald to drive round by the water-carrier's, so that the prolonged absence of the children need not alarm their kind friends, and then drive immediately to Elm Hill, the name of his present residence. But Gerald could not bear to leave his late home so abruptly; so it was settled that they should walk home, and that Mr. Lewis should call for them in the course of the afternoon.

Gerald now seemed to tread on air. It was such a wonderful thing to have kind relatives upon whose love and protection he had a natural claim. He wondered if all the little boys and girls he met had grandmothers to care for them. He tried, by an infinitude of signs, to convey to Nellie an idea of the good fortune awaiting them, but for once his method of intelligence failed entirely, and he only succeeded in awakening a remembrance of their mother, and an idea of some great good connected with her. He thought it very strange that their mother should not have told him of these near relatives, till it happened to occur to him that his father might have forbidden her to do so.

Was it strange that William and Mary Cory could not rejoice so heartily as they wished over the good fortune of the twins?

Night and morning they had prayed that the good providence of God would provide a way for the maintenance of

the poor orphans, but somehow the idea of a separation from them had not once been thought of. They had become strongly attached to them, and Mary could hardly believe that a mother, even, could watch with her affection over sweet Nellie.

"I'm sure, Gerald," she said, "I'm as glad as can be that you will be so much better off, but I can't help feeling bad too. We shall miss you every hour of the day. Nellie is so handy with the baby, and it is so pleasant to have her here when you are all out. Then, you're both the joy of Jimmie's life, and I'd just got your clothes made to wear to school this Winter. I do say it's too bad," said Mary, wiping her eyes.

"But, aunty," said Gerald, whose face had lengthened considerably while she was speaking, "I thought you would be ever so glad; we make so much work for you, and we're a great cost, I know."

"A great fiddlestick! I'd rather work twice as hard if we might all keep together, but I'm glad for your sake, Gerald, that you are to go. You'll both be healthier in the country. And I'm sure that your friends there will just about worship you."

"That would be wicked, aunty."

"How I'd like to see Nellie open her great eyes when she gets out into the open country!" said Mary, more cheerfully. "There'll not be many flowers now; it's too late; but the woods in October are more beautiful than you can think. And, Gerald, you'll be just in time to go chestnutting. I declare, I wish we were going too. I'm tired to death with the dust, and whirl, and racket, of this everlasting city!"

"I wish you were going," said the boy. "It would be so pleasant to see you every day, just as we do now. But, aunty, we shall come home here as often as we get money enough. I guess it an't a very great way off. I shall never forget you, no never!" he repeated earnestly, "and I know Nellie won't. When I'm a man and have lots of

money," said he, rising with sudden animation, "we'll all live in a big house in the pleasant woods together."

"Bless the boy! Have you never a plan for being a child, Gerald? I'd forget, if I were you, that I was ever to be any larger, and I'd play with Nellie in the green fields from morning till night."

William sat silently by, feeling even more low-spirited at parting than his more talkative wife; but Jamie went off to the garret to cry by himself, and would n't even come down to say good-by when Mr. Lewis came for them.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Here in the sultriest season let him rest,
Fresh is the green beneath those ancient trees ;
Here winds of gentlest wing will fan his breast,
From heaven itself he may inhale the breeze.”

ALLAN LEWIS had removed, about two years previous to this part of our story, from the city proper to a beautiful residence in its environs. It was called Elm Hill, and was almost, but not quite, a country residence.

Goodly trees cast their broad shadows upon the green plateau in front, and a row of beautiful elms lined both sides of the avenue down to the street. The grounds about the house were laid out with much taste, and on either side there were little latticed Summer-houses, screened from the sun's rays by the crimson clusters of the flowing woodbine, and contrasting strongly with the rich green leaves and more delicate blossoms of the choice shrubbery around.

The house itself, built by some fanciful imitator of the olden time, combined several forms of architecture. Seen from the street, it appeared to be a collection of projecting roofs, wide verandas, and deep oriel windows. It was of a stone color, and in the Summer time, when the trees were in leaf, it presented an appearance of singular beauty and quietude.

The passing traveler often paused to admire the rare roses that thickly draped the fluted columns of the porticos, and formed a natural trellis about the doors.

There was no shrubbery in front, nothing but the grand old trees ; not a flower, save here and there a lovely wild blossom, that came of its own accord to nestle in the soft velvet grass. *But there were fantastically-contrived fount-*

ains playing into marble basins, throwing their cool, limpid spray upon the heated air, and blending their musical fall with the sighing of the wind, or the notes of the birds, that often mistook the miniature grove for their native forest bowers.

Allan Lewis had purchased this lovely place at scarcely half its cost; for its builder had expended his whole fortune in erecting it, and was, therefore, obliged to sell it as soon as it was completed.

The house was fitted up inside in a style corresponding with its external appearance. This was Allan's work, and it was quite in accordance with his taste. The heavy mahogany furniture, carved with the quaint but almost obsolete conceits of the ancients, was quite in keeping with the silk and velvet hangings that covered the walls and canopied the windows.

The library was the pleasantest room in the house, although its imposing array of books gave it a somewhat staid aspect. A fine organ occupied a lofty recess at one end, for Allan still retained his passion for music. The ceiling was arched and tastefully frescoed, and the windows near the organ were of colored glass. There were choice paintings in somber antique frames, and a small but finely-sculptured group of statuary. A single vase of flowers, renewed every morning, was the sole ornament of the mantle, and completed the adornment of the room. But the chief charm of the whole house was in the indefinable air of repose that pervaded every part of it.

Allan had prepared all this as a sweet surprise for his young wife, Edith, and had brought her to her new home before she even knew that he had purchased it. Nothing could exceed her astonishment and delight at its appearance. For a few days she was continually in motion, examining again and again its various fixtures, and never tiring of the survey. Her correct taste suggested a few slight alterations, but no material difference was made, and it remained unique *in structure*, and as commodious as it was beautiful.

It was to this home that Mr. Lewis conveyed his orphan cousins. It was like entering a new world to them. They remembered the splendor and lavish luxury of their early home; and although they were too young when they left it to think much of its elegance, the subsequent privations and hardships that they had endured had given a warm roseate hue to all their dim recollections of their happy infantile life, and all its associations were beautiful.

Still, they had never imagined a scene like this. To be sure, the Summer flowers were gone, but in their places were many later and hardier blossoms, awaiting the first kiss of the light Autumn frost ere they departed.

The conservatories were radiant with floral loveliness, and singing among the exotic fruits and flowers were bright-plumaged birds, rejoicing in their happy unconsciousness of the changeful American climate.

Mrs. Lewis was at the door to welcome them when they arrived. Her voice sounded very low and sweet to Gerald, and he saw the tears in her eyes as she stooped to kiss his sister.

It was a warm afternoon, and the doors and windows were all open; so, instead of going directly in, they all sat down on a bench in the veranda.

"Let me take off your hat, my dear," said Edith to Nellie, who, attracted by the baby in her arms, had crept close to her side. "Bless me! what curls! I never saw such hair in my life, nor such a lovely face," she added, as the child took the baby's hand in hers and smiled.

"I think Gerald looks very much like her," said Allan. "They both resemble their poor, unfortunate mother. I see no likeness to my cousin in either of them."

Nellie was wholly absorbed in the baby. It was so little—only six weeks old—that she hardly knew what to make of it. She timidly took its little soft hand, and contrasted its size with hers. Such a tiny-bit of a hand! Such mites of rosy fingers! not half so large as little Ally Cory's. She turned it over and over with a wondering

look, her large, dreaming eyes sparkling like diamonds. Her mute admiration was not lost upon the baby's mother, although it was unnoticed by Mr. Lewis and Gerald, who were looking in another direction, where, away down among the flower beds, as far from the house as he could possibly get, little Harry was drumming and trumpeting with all his might.

"Well done, Harry!" exclaimed Allan, laughing, "not tired yet!"

"Tired!" repeated his wife in a tone of vexation, "there's no hope of that. I wonder at you, Allan. How could you allow him to get such toys when you know that, without any such aid, the house is never still a moment unless he is asleep?"

"He looked so funny, so comical, and roguish, Edith, that I could not deny him."

"There's no doubt of that. A fine reason, Allan, for indulging him. I've been half crazy all the afternoon, and I told him finally that he must either stop or go as far from the house as he could. Our neighbors will not thank me for treating them to such a racket, but it really is unendurable."

"I'm sorry it annoys you so, Edith," said Allan kindly, "but he was so charmed with them at the shop, and so fearful of losing them, that I'll warrant you would have bought them yourself if you had been there. He'll soon throw them aside as he did the rocking-horse. See! he's looking at us now as if he had half a mind to give it up."

"He's looking to see if we hear and admire his performance. He's been standing in the garden chair ever since he went out, so as to see the house and make sure of having auditors."

They all laughed, Edith joining in spite of her vexation, for the concert in the garden, which had not a moment's intermission, was certainly mirth-provoking. Gerald thought *it was very funny indeed*. More than once he wished for a

similar drum and trumpet to make music on his own account. So greatly are children charmed by a racket.

"There's one thing comforting about it," said Edith, "he don't require any looking after; there's no danger of his getting lost while he keeps up that abominable noise."

"I see that, like a wise woman, you have decided to make the best of it. I'll go and bring him in to tea. Is it ready?"

"It will be ready by the time you have secured silence. Come, my dears," turning to the children, "we'll go in with the baby and see about it."

Harry had very fortunately become weary and quite hungry enough for his supper. After tea they all went to the library for evening devotion. All kneeled while Mr. Lewis read the service from the Book of Common Prayer, the domestics reverently joining in the familiar responses. There was no hurry or carelessness about this family worship, but the hallowed privileges of the hour seemed to be sacredly prized by all. Even Harry kneeled with a grave face by his mother's side, but we fear, with very little appreciation of the object for which they were assembled, for the last words of the prayer had hardly been uttered when the little fellow exclaimed, with much vehemence, "Now music, papa!"

The effect of the organ upon Gerald was remarkable. His lip quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and his whole frame shook with strong emotion. He struggled in vain to control himself, and at last, in the middle of the piece, he threw himself upon the floor and sobbed aloud. Allan stopped playing, astonished at the boy's exhibition of feeling.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked, as he raised the weeping child and placed him on his knee. "Don't you like the organ, Gerald?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what is the matter? Are you not well?"

"Yes, sir. But you sung my mamma's song, and I

could n't help thinking how white and pleasant she looked when she sung it to me the last time—when she kissed me and Nellie before we went to sleep—and, O sir, in the morning she was dead !”

The child's sobs and tears burst forth anew. They tried to soothe him, but the effect of the music had been too powerful to be easily forgotten, and Edith rightly judged that the best way would be to divert his attention to other objects. So she took the children together into the back garden, and showed them a pet squirrel, and some white kittens that Harry persisted—in spite of the warning snarls of the cat-mother—in carrying round by their tails. There was a variety of long scratches on his red, chubby hands to testify to his previous exploits in the same line. Two parrots hung in a large cage from the branch of a tree, noisily engaged in disputing about their housekeeping. So at least Mrs. Lewis told Gerald, whose mouth was soon agape with wonder as he heard the birds, in good English, though with a slight foreign accent, ask about their supper. He thought he should never tire of them.

Presently they went to see the flowers, and Harry, refreshed by his supper, treated them to a few extra touches upon his musical instruments. They were soon very merry indeed, and returned to the house in fine spirits. They looked over Harry's picture-books and playthings till it was time to go to bed, till Nellie, tired out with the unusual excitement of the day, had fallen asleep in a corner of the sofa.

Mrs. Lewis went up stairs with them herself. Harry was to go to bed too, but he was as wide awake as if he had slept all day. He went first into his cousins' room to wait till they were undressed, but he was so wild and frolicsome that his mother was obliged to send him out of the room when the children kneeled in prayer.

Afterward, when it was his turn to repeat his childish evening petition, it was at first difficult to persuade him *to begin*, and then he interspersed so many questions and

baby witticisms among the solemn words that it could hardly be called a prayer at all. At last, the patience and perseverance of his mother brought him safely to the end, which fact he announced to the whole house by a sonorous and energetic amen.

Edith felt really provoked with him, but he clasped his fat chubby arms around her neck, and put up such a rosy little mouth for her to kiss, that she had not the heart even to scold him.

"He is so young," she thought, "only three. He will surely be different by and by. Now, Harry," she said aloud, "you must be mamma's good little boy to-night. Do you hear, Harry?"

"Yes, mamma, me hear. Say it again."

"You must shut up your eyes close—so—and go directly to sleep, so as to wake up in the morning before the squirrel does."

"Me is 'sleep, mamma. See!"

And the roguish eyes were shut so tightly that the delicate lids were full of tiny wrinkles.

"Well, just be sure not to wake up till morning, that's all."

After she went down, he lay a short time contentedly watching the shadows made by the young moon, till, unluckily for his slumbers, he caught sight of the moon itself, a pale crescent, resting, as he thought, upon the roof of a neighboring house. To see it better, he slid out of his crib, and climbed into a chair by the window.

Presently Gerald heard his door softly open, and, looking up, saw the little fellow, in his night-gown, peeping in.

"Harry! O, you must go right back! You mustn't come in here."

"Me will come. Me won't stay alone; me *will* sleep in your bed," said the child, setting his little bare foot down quite resolutely. "Me will tell you about the pony that papa bought next Summer. Please, let Harry come?" said the little fellow, suddenly assuming a coaxing expression.

"O no ! you must n't. What will your manima say ? Go back, Harry, do. That 's a good boy."

"Her won't care. Her will let me come. I know her will."

Nellie was sound asleep, and Gerald was afraid of disturbing her, but he contrived to make room for Harry, who nestled close to his side, and seemed greatly pleased with his crowded quarters. He had left the door open, and the light from the hall lamp shone pleasantly into the room, but Gerald was too dull now to enjoy it ; so, coaxing his restless little cousin to lie still in his arms, they were soon slumbering sweetly.

An hour later, when Mr. Lewis and his wife retired, they were a little alarmed by the disappearance of their child, but they soon hunted him up, and without awaking him, brought the young truant back safely to his own crib.

Gerald and Nellie were only to remain a few days at Elm Hill, till Mr. Lewis could get ready to take his family on a long-proposed excursion to L.

His grandmother still lived, and at the advanced age of ninety-three was, in her own language, "smarter than half the young misses." Her industry was truly astonishing. During the past year she had pieced up and quilted a bed-quilt in one of the most intricate patterns that had delighted her youth, and had spun and woven with her own hands a fine piece of flannel that had taken the prize at the State Fair. Her achievements in the line of stocking-knitting it would be hopeless to enumerate ; there were scores and scores of pairs of the softest lamb's wool laid away in snug corners as yet unknown to the jesuit moths, all ready to protect the nether extremities of her posterity, even unto the third generation.

Allan's brother was still a bachelor. Just now there were rumors afloat in connection with certain prolonged visits of his to a neighboring farmer's house, and with certain evening walks which were known to be neither dark *nor solitary*, being lighted by a pair of the brightest black

eyes in the world. It was soon conjectured that the minister had been spoken to ; and then, to silence doubt forever, the young man was continually chanting to himself, unconscious of auditors, the well-known stanza :

“ Fly swift around, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day.”

It was to be present at the wedding that Mr. Lewis and his family were now to visit the old family mansion.

CHAPTER VII.

"The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness—
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth and Gothic walls between,
And wild rocks shaped as they had turrets been."

It was morning away down in Rosedale. A thin haze dimmed the sun's first beams, but it melted away before the ripe peaches had dreamed of drying the tears on their velvet cheeks, or the clear day breezes had ventured from their hiding-places far in the clefts of the gray, beetling crags. The pure golden rays lighted up the green valley which owes its name to the myriad roses that cluster about its mountain boundaries and from fragrant hedges by the fences across the low pastures.

There was but one dwelling-house in the dale, and that was the large, old-fashioned, and unpainted farm-house where sweet Lucy Clare had been reared. It stood on a gentle rising ground at some distance from the road, and in the gray twilight was hardly discernible among the magnificent elms and maples that threw their protecting arms over and around it.

The house was more than a hundred years old ; its heavy timbers and massive chimneys giving incontestable proof of its antiquity, and no living person could remember when those giant trees were planted before its door. Vast multitudes of gentle birds had during those long years built their pretty homes in sly, mysterious little nooks among the branches, and the wren, the phœbe-bird, and the martin had long ago ceased to trespass upon each other's premises along the overhanging eaves. It was worth a day's journey in

Summer to hear the concert that rang out from the leafy orchestra and filled the old house with music.

Still, in the opinion of the neighbors, the house looked "a bit melancholy," except at noon, when the sun permeated the interstices of the foliage and threw its flickering beautiful shadows all over the somber-colored mansion.

The slight elevation on which it stood commanded a fine view of the little dell, which, in connection with the house, had constituted the whole property of the Clare family for nearly a century. The profits that accrued from it were amply sufficient for the comforts and real necessities of life, but provided no luxuries.

They had, indeed, *one* luxury, for which many thousands of enervated and yellow-looking fashionables were every Summer scouring the country, and making themselves ridiculous; namely, rosy, vigorous health, the usual companion of simple fare and hardy exercise.

At the south, an opening between the hills afforded a ~~fine~~ prospect of the neighboring village, with its neat dwellings and trim school-houses. The slender spire of the old church, with its time-worn and time-honored weather-cock, stood in the midst, and as the good people had no leisure to foment quarrels, or to rear schismatics, the one church had been sufficient hitherto to accommodate all who came.

The great clock in the tower of the church regulated every clock in the region, and every hour unflinchingly tolled the knell of the time forever departed. Somehow the sound seemed to come to a focus in the very heart of Rosedale, and reverberated about the old homestead, chiming pleasantly with the lowing of the cattle, the hum of the industrious bees, or the musical prattle that knew no rest of the spring gushing cool and sparkling from its fountain in the rear.

It was a quiet and unpretending place, beautiful in every season; even when the Winter wreathed its snows among the mountain pines and laurels, and the long icicles fringed

the edges of the shelving rocks, and gleamed like prisms far up the bleak hill-sides.

It was a place where the soulless devotee of fashion would be bored to death in a week, but where a thinking mind—a lover of the handiwork of the great Creator, would find exhaustless sources of enjoyment.

O, it is a thousand pities that the intercourse of society should often so corrupt the taste, and the heart too—should so blunt the finest perceptions of our nature as to render us insensible to the loveliness of a *quiet* landscape!

Coming, as it does every season—with all its beauties retinted—fresh from the hands of the great Artist, we refuse to be charmed so long as it is unpretending. But let some person of eminence note its exquisite beauty, and make it classic ground with the accuracy of his glowing description, and we are alive with interest. We wonder that our eyes—usually so clear—were ever blind to its rare excellence. The crowd begin at once to gape, to admire, and to wonder at its exquisite loveliness.

Most of us need a guide-book when we go out, with a wide margin, like a famous manuscript sermon, full of directions to “cry here,” and “admire here,” “be lost in rapture here,” so incapable are we of appreciating the really beautiful for ourselves, of looking for ourselves, of judging for ourselves, or of enjoying ourselves by ourselves.

But a truce with fault-finding; for we must not forget that it is a cloudless October morning down in Rosedale.

There is a merry jingle of shining tin pans in the long kitchen, and the wide dairy at the further end displays a goodly array of rich, yellow butter and round, creamy cheeses, ready to be sent to the market. The breakfast-table is set in front of the huge fireplace, for the morning is a trifle chilly. A little girl sits on a low bench by the fire, nursing a puny chicken, which, with an improvidence unworthy of a hen mother, has been brought into the world much too late to become stout and vigorous before the cold season shall arrive.

The little girl is an old acquaintance of ours. We are sure at once that we have seen that plain, freckled face, with its beautiful expression, before. It is Lila Wood, the same dear child, who, after following her dead mother to the tomb so unconsciously, haunted Gerald's dreams the live-long night. Her father is a sailor. He has found in Rose-dale a safe home for his darling child, and to provide liberally for her future he is already far away on the blue, fathomless sea.

Grandfather Clare and his wife have found again something to love, her childish presence is like sunlight in their dwelling, and the quick pattering of her small feet upon the floor is the reawakening of a strain of music, long hushed but not forgotten.

A handsome, motherly old lady is bustling about here and there, and, although the breakfast is now quite ready, seemingly unable to keep still a moment. She is waiting for some one. She has sounded the old tin horn twice, and each time have the saucy echoes answered back from the hills, but still grandfather Clare does not come. She goes every moment to the window, and, putting out her heavy-bordered cap, peers anxiously through her great round spectacles.

"Lila," she says at last, "run out to the barn and tell grandpa breakfast is waiting. Tell him the eggs are getting cold and the buckwheat cakes won't be fit to eat if he do n't hurry. You need not carry the chicken; I'll see to it while you are gone, though it is of no use. Poor thing! it can't live."

Lila put the chicken carefully into the old lady's apron, and was off like a bird. But she could n't find any trace of grandfather Clare.

"He is n't any where," said the child positively, after she had searched the barn, the yard, the corn-house, and woodshed, and even the pig-sty. She was returning slowly to the house to report the fact of his non-existence, still looking for him on this side and that, when she espied him

through the kitchen window, sitting at the table and quietly eating his breakfast.

"Why, grandpa," she exclaimed, as she hurried breathlessly into the room, "where have you been? I've looked every-where for you."

"I was in the back room washing my hands when you ran through. I have been here ever since. I was so small you could not see me, I expect. Did you have a nice time hunting for me?"

"I don't know; I'd rather find you when I look for you, but I found something I guess that grandma will like full as well."

"Indeed! what a little flatterer! What can that be, I wonder?"

Lila shook her head and looked very mysterious.

"O, never mind, I can go out and see it after breakfast!"

"But you can't find it. If you looked a dozen days you could n't," said Lila, triumphantly.

"Are you sure of it? My eyes are not so bright as yours, Lila, but if it is to please grandma so much it must be big enough for me to see it."

"Yes, but you are too big yourself. You can't get where it is to look at it. It is nice, grandma; it is good to eat," said Lila, smacking her lips.

Just then she thought of her chicken. It was lying dead on the hearth. She took it up and examined it attentively for some minutes as if a new thought occupied her mind. They expected an outburst of childish grief, but she manifested no sorrow.

"Are you not sorry for the poor chicken?" said Mrs. Clare.

"The cold Winter would have frozen it to death, grandma. Perhaps it will live again next Summer, when it is warm and pleasant. That would be better than to stay now. Do n't you think so?"

"Live again!" repeated the old lady, "why, what does

the child mean ? Do you suppose, Lila, that that chicken is coming to life again ?”

“When my manima died,” replied Lila, “the minister said that we must not grieve, for that those we love will surely come again, all fair and beautiful. He said not one would be forgotten, so it is n’t so sad to die as I thought.”

“Well, well, come and eat your breakfast, and then you can throw the chicken away.”

“Let me bury it, please.”

“You can do what you like with it. But I want to know what you found that I shall like and that grandpa can’t see.”

“It is away under the wall, behind that great bunch of thistles. It is a hen’s nest, and has eleven eggs in it.”

“Really ! And how came you to think of creeping in there ?”

“I saw the hen come out, and I thought that perhaps she had been hiding something from the other hens. So I crept in to see. O, I’m so glad, for you know, grandma, that you said if you had only one more dozen to send to market you could get the thick shawl that you wanted last Fall. Now, grandpa, would n’t she rather see the eggs than to see you ?”

“I believe you are a fairy and have just been using your wand.”

“What is a fairy, grandpa, and what is a wand ?”

“Now it’s my turn to puzzle. How much would you give to know, little one ?”

“What does he mean, grandma ?”

“It is some of his nonsense. He’s teasing you, that’s all. Perhaps he wants the eggs to eat, Lila.”

“But you’ll get the shawl, dear grandma ?”

“If the eggs are good, yes.”

Lila finished her breakfast, and then went out to select a spot to bury the chicken. She did n’t want to bury it near the house, for she had decided in her own mind to have funeral services, and she was afraid of being observed

and ridiculed. So she directed her steps toward a clump of low trees at no great distance, and having selected a suitable spot she commenced her preparations. She had procured a box to place the chicken in, but on trial it proved to be too small, so she was obliged to return to the house for a larger one.

She had gone but a few steps when her attention was arrested by the sound of a carriage on the wooden bridge just below the house. There was no public road through Rosedale. It was a little farm by itself, nearly half a mile from the highway, and, except when farmer Clare went to Church or to market, the rumbling of wheels was an unusual sound and always betokened visitors. So the child stopped and listened with considerable interest, and her heart beat quickly as she thought of her father. To be sure, it was very improbable that she should receive a visit from him who was so far away across the sea, but the bare thought flushed her cheeks and gave animation to her countenance. She had little time to indulge her pleasant fancies, for before she got half-way to the house she saw an elegant open carriage, drawn by two horses, stop at the door. A gentleman and a boy jumped out, and then the gentleman carefully lifted out a little girl. He rapped two or three times at the door, but no one came.

"I wonder if grandma do n't hear," said Lila. "There! he's knocking again. Where can she be? I'll run and let them in."

Just then the old lady's cap-frill appeared in sight, and Lila, who was naturally shy, determined to keep out of sight till the visitors were gone.

"Good morning, sir," said Mrs. Clare, as she opened the door with one hand and smoothed down her apron with the other. "Good morning. Will you walk in and take a seat, sir? It is a fine morning to ride. My husband is busy, but he'll be in directly."

"Why, mother Clare! Don't you know me?" asked the gentleman, laughing.

The old lady looked at him attentively through her spectacles before she recognized him.

"Bless me! it is Allan Lewis. You must excuse me, sir. My eyes are getting old, and I was not expecting to see you here. Are you well?"

"Quite well."

"And your family?"

"All perfectly well, I thank you."

"And these," said grandma Clare, turning to look at the children, "these are your little ones?"

She turned pale and trembled as her eye fell on Nellie. The child had removed her hat and seated herself in the old-fashioned window-seat, as if quite at home. O, how often, in former years, had a little form, with just such golden curls, sat in the same seat!

The old mother's heart throbbed painfully. She stood as if amazed, looking from the little girl to her brother, and from the children to Mr. Lewis.

"I've brought you here some treasures," said Allan, quietly.

"You don't mean to say, Allan Lewis," and she grasped his arm tightly, "that these are our Lucy's children?"

"Look at them. Can you doubt it?"

"And their father?"

"Is dead."

"The Lord be praised for that!" said grandmother Clare, devoutly.

She could not control her feelings; her usual firmness and resolution wholly deserted her. She clasped the children in her arms again and again; the tears rushed to her eyes and fell like rain upon Nellie's beautiful hair, and, sitting down and drawing them both close to her side, she leaned her head on Gerald's shoulder and sobbed aloud. Allan turned to the window to watch the restive horses, and to attend to his eyes and nose, which now presented unmistakable symptoms of a severe cold. Little Nellie looked wonderingly from one to another, as if she were at a loss to

comprehend the cause of so much emotion, and then clasped her arms lovingly about the old lady's neck.

"Don't cry, grandma," said Gerald, who was half crying himself for sympathy and joy. "Please, don't cry. Aren't you glad to see us? We've come to live with you always. Are you sorry?"

"Sorry! I bless the good Lord, darling, who has permitted me to see this day. And this dear child is deaf and dumb. What a pity! Mr. Lewis, when I look at her, it seems as if Lucy, our own Lucy, was here before me again."

"I think her resemblance to her mother is quite remarkable."

"I must call John. These little ones, sir, will seem like gifts directly from the hand of God to him."

The old man entered while she was speaking. He was not so much overpowered by meeting his grandchildren as his wife had been, but he received them with much affection. Nellie's heart opened to him at once, and she readily submitted when he placed her on his knee, although she retained her hold of Gerald's hand, who stood by her side. Stout and manly as the old farmer was, he too shed tears as he observed in each childish face the loved features of his departed daughter.

"You remember, sir," he said, turning to Mr. Lewis, "you remember our great love for Lucy. She was our pride, our idol. For a time she quite wiled our hearts from the God who gave her to us; but she was taken away. God was displeased with our idol-worship. It was a sore stroke to us, as you know, sir, when she left us; though we, poor fools, were comforted when we thought of the splendor around her. But far the hardest trial was hers. I knew she would droop and die if none of her friends were permitted to see her, for she dearly loved her old father and mother. But we minded her request and never went near her. Only, once a month, I watched near her proud home, to see her at the window or the door a moment, so as to know that our *darling* child was well. But she never knew it. Here

where she was born, and where she grew up so lovely, night and morning did our prayers for our lost, unhappy darling, go up to heaven, till it pleased God, in his mercy, to take her home."

There was a silence of some moments after the old man spoke; for his words stirred again the old fountain of grief in their hearts.

"Is it always shadow here?" asked the boy, who had been gazing reverently up through the small diamond panes of the windows to the huge green branches interlaced on the outside.

"Does the sunlight never get through, grandma?"

"Not much, my dear; but you can play out in it all day if you like."

"Is it always so very still? Are there no children here? Will there be nobody but Nellie and me to play together?"

Gerald's voice was rather desponding, for somehow, the somber old shadows oppressed his spirits, and he felt lonely. Nellie's fair face, too, looked a little sad, as she stood now thoughtfully by her brother.

"Come, come," said grandma Clare, "this will never do. Lila!" she called, "Lila!" and in a moment a pale, slender, but sweet-looking child appeared at the door.

Gerald's countenance brightened as if by magic.

"Did you call, grandma?" asked Lila, without raising her eyes to look at the visitors.

"Yes, Lila. I want you to show these children all the things out of doors that you like so well. Show them the rabbits and the little puppies, but don't handle them or Ponto will be cross."

"May we go to the orchard, grandma? The apples cover the ground, and are as bright as gold."

What a sweet voice she had! Grandma smiled pleasantly.

"Yes, yes, go where you like, but don't stay long; and take a basket and bring some of the finest of the fruit when you come in."

So they went out, hand in hand, as if they had been acquainted for years, gracefully omitting the cumbrous forms of etiquette that are so burdensome in more mature life.

Being left alone with the old couple, Mr. Lewis spoke as delicately as possible of the additional expense that they must incur by giving a home to the children; and generously offered to provide for them himself. The old man was known far and wide for the sturdy independence of his character, and, as Allan expected, was quite unwilling to receive any assistance. He was proud as well as poor.

"But you know," urged Allan, "that Lucy always considered me as a brother, and how can I better show that I valued her sisterly regard than by assisting to rear and educate her orphan children?"

"You are very kind, but we do not need help from any one. We shall contrive to get along very well. Indeed, sir," said the old man, "we can provide all that is needful, I am sure."

"Yes. But poor Nellie should be, without delay, I think, placed in some institution for the deaf and dumb. She ought not to be deprived a moment longer than is absolutely necessary of the privilege of learning to communicate readily with others, or of the luxury, especially precious to such as her, of storing her mind with the knowledge contained in books."

"Is she not happy as she is?"

"She is contented now, no doubt, for she is a mere child, but, if she lives, she will some time be a woman; it may be unprotected and homeless, for you will not always be here to shelter her."

"We are getting old, that is very true."

"And it is really an injustice to the child, an unkindness even, to suffer her to grow up ignorant and helpless. The only way really to benefit her is to render her independent."

"I do n't know but you're right, although I'm sure that Gerald will never cease to cherish her. I see already how

they cling to each other. He will always watch over her, Mr. Lewis."

"It is possible that Gerald too may be taken from her. He has no lease of his life. The young have no security against death. Now, Mr. Clare, I really have this matter very much at heart. It seems cruel to doom one so lovely and intelligent to comparative darkness and ignorance. Think how dreadful her fate must be, if thrown by adversity upon her own resources—shut up within herself, unable to make herself understood, unable to provide for herself, and very likely feared and shunned on account of her infirmity by the superstitious mortals around her."

"It is a dark picture that you have drawn, sir."

"But not darker than the reality would be."

"Perhaps not. You know more about it, very likely, than we do. I never saw but one deaf and dumb person, and ~~that~~ was Dick Atkins, of L. He manages to make folks understand him."

"Yes, but how ridiculous he appears, blowing out his cheeks, and twisting and snorting himself into convulsions. You would n't like to have Nellie, who is the very picture of your lost daughter, obliged to resort to such antics to become intelligible?"

There was a pause of some moments, and then farmer Clare asked abruptly,

"What is it that you want? What do you propose to do?"

"I propose," said Allan, without noticing the old man's rough manner, "that after she has been here awhile, and has learned to regard Rosedale as her home, and you, my dear friends, as her natural protectors, that she be placed for two or three years in one of the best institutions for the deaf and dumb that our country affords. There is a superior select school for mutes in the city, not far from my house. The superintendent is a particular friend of mine, and I can vouch for his skill and faithfulness. Under his care she would still be where I could constantly observe her and

report her progress to you. She would, doubtless, be allowed to visit you occasionally. I propose, also," said Mr. Lewis, smiling, "that all this be done wholly at my expense."

"Ah, sir, that is what we stick at! To think of burdening others with our own children!"

"You need not think of it at all. The obligation, if there is any, will be on my side. Besides, their father was my cousin, which gives them a claim on me."

"Yes; but who will separate them? Gerald can not go with her."

"No, sir. Gerald must remain here. He is a sensible boy, and is so alive to his sister's welfare that there will be no difficulty with him. He needs the outdoor exercise he will get here to toughen him. He is too delicate for a boy. Your district school will be all sufficient for him at present, for I think he must have forgotten his letters. I will speak to him about this plan for Nellie, when it is necessary. You haven't an idea yet how bright and active he is. He'll be the staff of your old age, sir. Now, Mr. Clare, just say that this matter is settled, and that you are not to oppose my plans, and I will go. I promised to take my wife and mother to ride on my return to L."

"I will not oppose any plan for the dear child's good, and I feel your kindness, sir; but still," persisted the old farmer, "I should like it much better if I could do it myself. You see, sir, that I am a living proof of the truth of the old proverb that 'pride and poverty always go together.'"

"Your independence does you honor, my friend, but I must be off, so good-morning to you both."

He shook hands heartily with the old couple and was just stepping into his carriage, when the shouts of the children made him pause. Gerald had a quantity of fruit to send to his cousin Harry, who, by the way, was already busy with the choice varieties of his grandmother's orchard, and Nellie brought a ripe, velvet peach for Allan himself. They were in high glee. There was not a trace of sadness on *either countenance*, and Lila looked really beautiful in her

joy at the prospect of childish society. Mr. Lewis observed her with much interest. He saw, at a glance, that she would be a safe companion for his orphan cousins.

"Where did you get this pleasant little fairy?" he asked.

"Her father is a sailor," said grandma. "He married Mary Gay, of L. You have not forgotten her?"

"No, indeed!"

"Well," continued grandma, "she is dead—died of consumption a few weeks ago. The child's father is at sea, and she is boarding with us till he returns."

"And what is your name, my dear?" asked Allan.

"Lila Wood, if you please," said the child, blushing and courtesying.

"A very pretty name, indeed; and so Mary Gay is dead. Well, good-by, little ones."

The children laughed and danced as the impatient horses pranced and reared, and dashed quickly down the hill, over the bridge, up the long lane, and then out of sight. Then, having obtained leave, they scampered back with great glee to the orchard again. Happy childhood, so soon forgetful of its sorrows!

CHAPTER VIII.

"There be none of beauty's daughters
With a magic like thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me."

Two weeks passed pleasantly by and Lila never thought of the dead chicken.

Farmer Clare, whose fine fruit always brought a high price in the market, had had a busy time of it. He had found the benefit of having three pairs of little hands to assist him. Considerable care was necessary in assorting and storing the fruit, for it was mostly for Winter use. There were red-cheeked Baldwins, golden pippins, nonpareils, and gillflowers, russets, and pearmains, and great quantities of that universal favorite in kitchen and parlor, the old-fashioned greening.

Then, there were Fall pears, late peaches, grapes, and plums, all doubly acceptable because the earlier kinds had all gone by.

To Gerald and his sister every thing was new. They had often stopped to admire the tempting fruit displayed in the stalls of the city, but what was that when compared with the rich variety and amazing profusion scattered here on every hand!

They were at first much pleased when permitted to assist in gathering it, but little folks soon tire, and after a day or two they discovered that there was more work than play in their occupation. They were not in the least sorry when, on the third morning, two stout men, engaged by farmer Clare, came to help.

In the pleasant evenings, after the cows were milked and

every thing was made snug about the premises, it was the delight of the old man to sit in his arm-chair beside his wife, and listen to their childish conversation. There was music in their laughing prattle, and they forgot how long the old house had been silent and lonely. They sat thus one bright evening till it was quite dark. They had forbore to question Gerald about his early trials, for they were unwilling to open afresh the wound not yet healed in their own hearts. But that night as they sat in the twilight, Gerald, in reply to Lila's inquiries, revealed all that they so dreaded and yet longed to know.

"Ah, Lila," said the boy, "you did n't think when the gentleman spoke so cross to me what a trouble I was in."

"O ho!" interrupted grandfather Clare, "so you and Lila are old acquaintances it seems."

"No, sir," answered Lila; "I did n't know him."

"But I knew her, grandpa, just as well as I do now."

"O, Gerald!"

"I did. You have n't changed a bit. You're just as"—

"Handsome?" suggested the little girl, laughing, as he hesitated for a word.

"No, not handsome. It's better than that. It's very different. I don't know what it is. It is like as the sunset was to-night, something besides handsome. It rested us, you know," he added—"it was so still."

"Am I so still?"

"Why, no, you're never still; but you're like the sunset, and the stars, and like the trees and flowers, too, I think. What is it, grandma, what is it I mean?"

"How can I tell, my dear, if you don't know yourself?"

"But is n't she different from other children? Is n't she more like what is out of doors than we are?"

"Really, Gerald, I don't see much difference. She plays, and sings, and chatters all day, and that is about what you all do."

"It is n't that. There's something else. The clear morn-

ing air makes me think of her, and when a little bird darts by I say 'Lila' before I think."

"Well, child," said grandma, "I must say that you have some queer fancies. What should she do to be like other children?"

"I don't know, at least I can't tell. I know she is not like me, or Nellie, or any child I know. She would n't be so pretty if she was."

"You said just now," said Lila, "that I was n't handsome."

"Well, you're not. Don't you see the difference? Nellie is handsome. Look at her now that she's watching the stars. She's the handsomest child in the world, I believe."

"She is very lovely. O, so very fair and lovely!" returned the child earnestly.

"Grandma," said Gerald, suddenly, "did you see Lila then?"

"No, my dear, but I know how she looked."

"Then do tell me, grandma, what it is about her that is prettier even than Nellie's blue eyes and soft curls?"

Lila laughed and clapped her hands.

"I'll tell you, Gerald. I'm a fairy. Grandpa says I am a fairy."

"What is a fairy?"

"I looked out the word in the Dictionary. It means an enchantress, one that can bewitch people. So you're bewitched, Gerald, that is all. Ah, Gerald, I've got a plan for to-morrow that you will like I know. Don't tell him, grandma."

"Not unless I happen to forget. But the first thing to be done in the morning is to unpack the trunks that Mr. Lewis sent to-night. Full of clothing, I suppose, though how he could guess at the size, Gerald, is more than I can tell."

"We were measured before we left the city. Do you think, grandma, that he has sent some books? Could n't

I learn some before I go to school? The boys will laugh at me if I do n't."

"You can study in my arithmetic and geography," said Lila; "we can study together."

"Can you read, my dear?" asked the old lady.

Gerald felt his cheek burn with shame and his voice was a little unsteady as he replied, "I could read some when mamma died, but I'm afraid I've forgotten."

"Never mind," said Lila, cheerfully, "you will learn in no time. It is n't hard at all. I'll be your school-ma'am, and we'll begin to-morrow. You'll learn ever so fast. Won't it be pleasant?"

"Why, what a chatterbox!" said grandfather Clare, rousing himself from a very diminutive nap. "It's time for all these plans to be laid on the shelf, and for all these bright eyes to be shut up for the night. I shall want the fairy, and some of the folks that she has bewitched, early in the morning."

So the candles were brought, the great family Bible, in its trim covering of green flannel, was laid on the stand, with the old man's spectacles, and a holy, reverent silence fell on all, while the sacred words were read and the humble evening petitions were offered.

In the morning Gerald was curious to know Lila's great plan for the day. But not a word could he get from her on the subject till all the morning chores about the farm were done, the trunks unpacked, and their contents admired, and he had taken his first lesson in reading. Divers sly winks and smiles, and mysterious nods passed between Lila and his grandmother, and he was in a fever of expectation when the child announced that they were to go chestnutting.

Chestnutting! Mrs. Cory had said that he would be just in time to go chestnutting. He had seen chestnuts, but whether they grew on vines, bushes, or trees, or in the earth, like a potato, he had n't an idea. He did not like to betray his ignorance, for he remembered how he was laughed at on the second night after his arrival in Rosedale, just for

asking for some bits of twine to fasten the fowls to their roost, so that the poor things might not fall off in their sleep.

Lila knew all about it. She had often been in the country with her mother, and knew every turn in the broad acres of woodland about L. Short as had been her residence in Rosedale, she had found her way to nearly every nook and corner of the hills around. Nature had made her a dryad, and she was never so happy as when roving, unrestrained, over her forest domain.

The village children generally ransacked every patch of woods in the vicinity. There was not a nut or a berry secure from these youthful predatory hordes, who brought very elastic if not very clear consciences to aid in their labors. But Lila was sure that she knew the whereabouts of several goodly chestnut-trees that the young urchins had never found.

The highest hill west of Rosedale was called, by way of distinction, Chestnut Mountain. It took its name from the enormous trees that grew along its western base. These were too distant for the children to visit. Near the top, on the eastern side, among ash and beech and button-woods, were the trees that Lila claimed as sole discoverer thereof.

They were soon equipped with baskets and a light dinner, and set off in high spirits. Even Nellie, who could not yet understand the precise object of the excursion, was made very happy by it.

The soft, elastic air of the Indian Summer gave buoyancy and animation to her slight figure, and she skipped and ran over the short grass till her cheeks were crimson with the exercise. But when they began to ascend the mountain it was not so funny. She soon tired, and they were obliged to stop and rest. The hill-side presented a succession of rocky terraces whose edges were draped with laurel and ivy, and a species of running vine. The children stopped often for Nellie to rest, and at each new halt Lila pointed out new *beauties in the ever-widening landscape*. The farm-house

soon looked like a birdsnest at their feet, and the low hills which bounded Rosedale on the east, were like a line of little green mounds. Still the view enlarged as they ascended. Lila was in ecstasies. She strove hard to inspire Gerald, who seemed interested only in watching her, with a portion of her exquisite sense of the beauties of nature. Child as she was, she seemed unconscious of fatigue, and when at last they reached the top, and Nellie, and Gerald even, was quite exhausted, she sat down on a fallen tree which formed a slight parapet on the edge of the precipice, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of the scene.

It was no common panorama that was spread out before her. Gerald soon forgot his fatigue, and came and stood by her side, but beautiful as the view was to him after his experience of the pent-up city, he could not appreciate her enthusiasm. He was charmed with the prospect, but not so absorbed in it. Nellie clung to his hand, half frightened by the dizzy elevation on which they stood, and by the wide expanse of the view.

There was that soft, golden haze in the atmosphere peculiar to the season, and the foliage of the distant trees, colored by the frost, appeared as if seen through a camera. Beyond the village, far away to the south-east, rolled the beautiful Hudson, sparkling in the sunlight, its blue waters curled by the breeze or whitened into foam by the numerous vessels passing and repassing upon its bosom. There were pleasant-looking villages upon its distant banks; the little upland slopes were dotted with white villas and cottages, and a hundred glittering spires pointed from the green dells to heaven. Beyond all, at the extreme verge of the horizon, towered mountain upon mountain, their dark cones looking, as Gerald said, "like great thunder-clouds."

The boy's thoughts continually wandered from the glorious prospect and busied themselves about the chestnuts. He kept pulling Lila's sleeve to hurry her.

"Come, now," he said, "you have seen it all over and over. Let us go."

"In a minute. Do n't be in such a hurry. Look, Gerald, down by the house; there's grandma in front of the door. How little she looks! not much bigger than my doll!"

"Hark!" said Gerald. "She's blowing the horn. It's dinner-time. I'm glad of that, for I'm as hungry as a bear."

"No, it is n't noon," returned Lila, "I know by the sun. She wants grandpa for something."

"But, Lila," said the boy, "it's a real bother to carry our dinner around. Let us make believe it is noon, and eat it up, and have it out of the way. We can eat chestnuts when we get to them if we are hungry."

Lila laughed, but made no objection, and the dinner soon disappeared.

"Now, then," said Gerald, jumping up, "hurrah for the chestnuts! which way, Lila?"

"Straight down the path till you come to the flat rock where the Indians used to build their fires. Let me go before you. I forgot that you were never here before. The Indians used to live up here. Grandpa showed me the print of an Indian's foot in a rock close by. Some say it is the print of the devil's foot."

"Let us see it."

"Here it is. See! it is full of rain."

"It is n't shaped like a foot at all."

"It looks more like it when it has no water in it, but perhaps it is a wrong story."

"I know it is," replied the boy, positively, "because his feet never'd be hard enough to make such a place in a rock. What makes that great black spot?"

"That is where the fires were made. O, Gerald," said Lila, her face glowing with beautiful earnestness, "I'd like so much to see the Indians living here again! It was a happy life to stay always in the beautiful woods, and all the night and day to hear the wind, and the birds, and the little *springs*."

"But when it rained or snowed, or was cold enough to freeze off their toes, it was n't so funny, Lila."

Lila laughed merrily as her bit of romance melted away. She led the way through a shady path, followed as closely as the thick underwood would permit by her companions, who were continually slipping down on the dry leaves. No such accidents befell her, and she only faltered in her light, firm tread when it was necessary to assist them.

"Where are you leading us?" asked Gerald, a little petulantly after one of these downfalls. "Where are we going?"

"Chestnutting."

"I do n't think I want any chestnuts if we are to go much further for them. We sha 'n't get rested in a week."

"It is only a few steps further. Can you climb trees, Gerald?"

"Why, have n't you seen me climb the trees in the orchard?"

"Ah, but I mean tall trees like those by the house."

"Do chestnuts grow on such trees?"

"Some of the trees are very high indeed. Ah, you won't have to climb, for here we are, and here are plenty of chestnuts on the ground."

"Where?"

"All around you. You're standing on them. Look, Gerald, the ground is covered!"

"But what are these prickly things? Where do they come from?"

"Why, those are the burs. The chestnuts grow inside. Let Nellie sit here in the shade while we are gathering them. She is tired out. Poor Nellie! pretty Nellie!" said the little girl, caressingly, "sit here on my shawl. I'll bring you lots of nuts."

But Nellie brightened up when she found out the purpose for which the baskets were brought, and set to work with great glee to help fill them.

"Lila," said Gerald, who had been in a deep study over

some burs that he held in his hand, "I want to know how the chestnut gets out. Who opens these prickly balls?"

Lila laughed immoderately.

"Why, grandpa says that Mr. Jack Frost does that while we are asleep."

"Who's he?"

"I do n't know. You must ask grandpa."

They worked quite steadily awhile, and the appearance of the baskets was soon very promising.

"Now, if we hurry," said Gerald, "we shall get these baskets full and get home to dinner."

"We've been to dinner, you know," said Lila, roguishly.

"I can't help that; I'm as hungry as ever. This chest-nutting is hungry business. Let us hurry and go home."

"It would be a pity to go back before sunset. You can't think how pleasant it is to see the shadows grow darker and darker."

"I should think we had shadows enough at home, if that is what you like so well. I do n't like them. I wish every night that those great trees would burn down close to the ground, if they would n't set the house on fire."

"Why, Gerald!"

"I do. I like bright things like roses, and pears, and apples, and like you, Lila."

"And like a good dinner especially, such as grandma is cooking."

"You need not laugh at me. I dare say you are hungry yourself. Now, are n't you?"

"A little. The baskets are almost full, and we can come again to see the woods and the rocks."

"To be sure we can, any time—to-morrow or next day. O, there'll be days enough! Do n't you think, Lila, that we've got as many chestnuts as we can carry?"

"They're not heavy. We can fill the baskets in five minutes. Nellie's is full now. Grandma will be pleased if they are full."

"What does she care about it?"

"Why, she said that if we got a lot of nuts—chestnuts, walnuts, butternuts, and beech and hazel-nuts—laid up in the garret, we should have fine times cracking and eating them this Winter. Winter is most here, I suppose."

"Are n't you tired, Lila?"

"No. I'm never tired here. The wood is so beautiful."

"So I think. The next time, Lila, we'll bring a great pailful of victuals, and it will be pleasanter. We'll stay all day then."

The children were not long in reaching home. It was much easier descending the mountain than it had been to ascend it. When they came in sight of the house they saw a carriage at the door, which Gerald was sure belonged to Mr. Lewis. He was right, and grandma Clare was just expressing her regret that the children were absent when Gerald opened the door.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, "here they are, with bag and baggage."

"And with a fine lot of nuts, too," said Mr. Lewis.

Gerald set down his basket and sprang joyously to meet him. His face had already grown so round and chubby that he hardly resembled the pale child that he had been but a month before. The un-childlike expression of care and anxiety had disappeared. He had been a miniature man, with a burden of responsibility weighing upon his shoulders; now he was a merry, hardy child, always observing and forever asking questions.

"Why, you're getting as tough as a pine-knot, Gerald," said his kind cousin. "Your friends, the Corys, would not know you." He looked around for Nellie, who, her eyes sparkling with joy, stood twirling her hat in her hand by the door. He beckoned her to approach, but she held back shyly. Presently, when he ceased to notice her, she came noiselessly to his side, and, climbing into a chair, stole her little, fat arm lovingly around his neck. This was Nellie's method of expressing love and confidence. Allan was much pleased with this mute expression of affection. He sat with-

out stirring, lest he should frighten her away, only kissing the soft, little hand that rested on his shoulder.

"After dinner, Gerald," said he, "I am going to take you out to ride."

"Will Nellie and Lila go too, sir?"

"Not at first. I want to teach you a little about driving. We'll come back soon for them, and then all have a ride together."

Gerald grew an inch taller directly, on hearing this.

"Is grandma going?" asked Lila, timidly.

"Yes, all hands. There are two seats. I can stow in a dozen such little folks, besides taking a couple on my knee."

Gerald lost his appetite as soon as he learned that he was to drive the horses. He went to the door and looked at the noble bays as if he were fascinated. Mr. Lewis told him that he had called twice on kind William Cory; that little Ally had learned to walk alone, and that Jamie had actually in his possession a long, golden curl of hair that he had stolen from Nellie's head. Not a word of this did the boy understand, although only the day before his desire to hear from the kind family had been unreasonably fervent. But now he was, in imagination, driving the horses over hill and dell at the top of their speed, only curbing them, when—like the enchanted horse in the Arabian tales—they rose from the ground.

"Come, Gerald," said grandma, "Lila says, my dear, that you hurried home in such good season because you were so hungry. Come—the dinner is ready."

"I am not hungry now. Let me stand here and see the horses while Mr. Lewis is eating. If you please, sir, might I sit in the carriage till you are ready?"

"No, no indeed! I'll tell you a plan worth two of that. Sit down here by my side and forget the horses, and tell me about your picking chestnuts. Ah! I must tell you how Harry spoiled his trumpet. He was trying to remove a small mound in the garden, and he used the trumpet to carry away the sand."

Gerald sat down, laughing at his little cousin's ingenuity, and Mr. Lewis succeeded in occupying his attention, till the appetite, which really required but little coaxing to return, had asserted its rights and he had dined heartily.

"Now, Gerald," said Mr. Lewis, rising from the table, "I think you'll do. If you can eat like this without any appetite, what *do* you do when you are hungry?"

The boy blushed as they all joined in a merry laugh at his expense, and he would not reply, when Lila whispered,

"Shall I fill the great pail with victuals and put it in the carriage?"

But he forgot all this as soon as they were in the carriage, and when Mr. Lewis put the lines in his hand and permitted him to drive through the long lane, his enjoyment was complete. It was not so easy for an inexperienced hand to guide them as he supposed. The high-spirited animals were unused to such management, and they galloped and pranced, and veered from the road, as if under no control whatever. Mr. Lewis was very soon obliged to take charge of them, and Gerald saw with wonder and admiration that they were almost instantly subdued. They knew very well when their master held the reins.

By degrees Mr. Lewis led his young cousin to speak of himself, and succeeded in eliciting the boy's own views in regard to his future. He disclosed the only secret of his heart—his ambition to be a scholar. Allan was delighted. He had feared lest the disadvantages of his early life had prevented his considering the importance of cultivating his mind, and that the confinement and steady application of the school-room would be irksome to him. He encouraged him to improve his present privileges, and promised to do all in his power to open his way to learning and future usefulness. Then he spoke of Nellie; of her great misfortune, of her beauty and intelligence, and that she could never learn in Rosedale any of those things which were to make Gerald so happy. All the subjects that would delight him in more mature life must be sealed mysteries to her.

When their childish sports ceased, they would have nothing in common but their love for each other. Gerald burst into tears.

"I can't bear to think of it, sir. It is dreadful."

"Don't cry so, my dear boy. I've spoken of all this because I want to ask you a question. Do you think, Gerald, that you could bear to be separated from her awhile, if by going away she could learn to read books—to read any thing that you might like to have her know, and to write out what she could not otherwise make you understand?"

"Why, sir," replied Gerald, quite amazed, "she could n't ever learn that any where."

"O, yes, she could in a little time. There are schools, Gerald, on purpose for those who can't hear or speak, where they learn all sorts of things. They get so that they can talk with their fingers nearly as fast as you do with your tongue."

"With their fingers, did you say, sir?" asked Gerald, who thought he had misunderstood.

"Yes, they have a finger language."

"Like Nellie's signs, sir?"

"Well, something on the same principle I suppose, but it is a regular system. Any one can learn it. You would probably acquire it in a short time from Nellie herself, if she were once familiar with it. I've been to the schools often, and it is a sight worth seeing—hundreds of little fingers flying about like bees among flowers, and their eyes sparkling with pleasure, as they comprehend some new idea. They always seem happy."

Gerald did not immediately reply. He sat silently thinking.

"If Nellie goes, can I stay with her?"

"No, I suppose the rules of the school would not admit you. But you can visit her occasionally, and when you have both learned to write, what a pleasure it will be to receive letters from each other! And when she comes back, Gerald, and you see for yourself how the knowledge that she

has acquired increases her happiness, how glad you will be that you were not selfish enough to have caused her to grow up in ignorance. When every body is praising and admiring her, as I know they will, how glad you will be that she did n't grow up a dunce !”

Gerald sat now a long time silent. Mr. Lewis watched the changes of his countenance anxiously. The struggle of feeling manifested there was far more severe than he had calculated upon.

“Where is this school, sir ?” he asked at length.

“Only a short distance from my house. You will go with her, Gerald, to Elm Hill, and will see her at the Institution every day till she is acquainted and contented. The teacher, or rather Superintendent, is my friend. He is very kind to the pupils and they all love him tenderly. Besides, Gerald, I shall be near to visit her often, to watch over her always. It will not be like going away among strangers. Don't you see the difference ?”

“But what will mamma think if she knows it in heaven ?” sobbed the poor boy, now evidently proposing his weightiest objection. “She said I was *never* to leave Nellie ; that I was to take care of her every day as long as we lived. She made me promise to do so the very night she died.”

“I know that, Gerald, and a most kind and affectionate brother you have proved to her. But don't you see that you will still be taking just such care of her as your dear mother would approve ? You will be doing by her just as she would do if she were living. Do you think, Gerald, that your mamma would wish poor Nellie to grow up in ignorance when she may learn so much to make her happy ?”

“No, sir, I know she would n't. But”— He still hesitated.

“When your mother died, Gerald, there was no dear friend by her to whom she could commit her orphan children. Your father never allowed her to see her friends, or to communicate with them. She knew very well that he would

not suffer those who would befriend you after she was gone to have any control over you. She knew that poor Nellie would be subject to neglect and abuse, though I think that she did not know that you would be so poor. So it is n't at all strange, my dear boy, that she made you feel so strongly your duty to love and cherish your more helpless sister. But every thing is changed now. Her own kind parents and the friends of her youth are all desirous to benefit the dear ones that she loved, and the death of your father puts it in their power to do so. I am sure, Gerald, that you understand all this well enough, and will be brave and manly enough, to stifle all your regrets at parting with her, and will be willing, also, that she should go immediately, say the day after to-morrow."

His lip quivered, but he looked up cheerfully, and replied resolutely, "Yes, sir, if you think it best, sir."

"That is my noble boy," said Mr. Lewis, approvingly. "I told your grandmother you would think like a man on this subject. I was sure you would. And now we'll forget all about it for to-day, for we must all have cheerful faces in the carriage this afternoon. Do you think that grandma and the girls are ready?"

"They are standing in the door with their bonnets on."

"Well, then, we'll just show them how you can drive. Hold the lines snug and steady—so—and we'll go up the lane in fine style."

How Gerald's eyes sparkled! Was there ever a boy whose eyes did n't sparkle on a like occasion?

Farmer Clare had just returned from market, and was eating his dinner in the kitchen. He was too tired to accompany them, although Allan assured him that there was plenty of room. He would stay, he said, and see that the old house did n't run away.

The three children occupied the back seat, and Mrs. Clare sat with Allan in front. They went over the hills, miles away to the blue river, the same bright water that they had seen from the mountain in the morning. The region

of country afforded almost every variety of scenery, presenting a rapid succession of hills and plains and quiet little dells sprinkled with gardens and orchards. The genius of good taste seemed to preside over the country generally, for there was scarcely a white cottage that was not picturesquely situated, either on the brow of a hill or among the noble forest trees that had been left standing when the ground was cleared by the first settlers.

It seemed impossible to grandma Clare to keep Lila seated. At each change of the landscape she was on her feet, clapping her hands, and forgetting all her timidity in her admiration. Allan began to watch her looks with considerable interest, and when Gerald whispered to know if he did not think Lila handsome, his reply was rather contradictory.

"She is beautiful, Gerald, for one so plain-looking."

Lila began to sing, and the charm was complete. There was never a bird with a sweeter voice. Her mother—as Allan now remembered—had been a gifted child of song, and there was a touching pathos in the melody of the child that moved him to tears. Grandma Clare sat wiping her eyes, and declaring in a low tone her opinion that the girl was bewitched. They rode through L. at last, and went to take tea with Allan's wife and mother. The new black-eyed bride was there quite at home, and little Harry too, who had found a conch-shell to use instead of his trumpet.

How much the children had to tell the old farmer that night! What a long, bright day it had been! Yet now that the evening had come, Lila thought that both Gerald and the old people had unaccountable fits of silence. An unmistakable expression of sadness stole occasionally across grandma's pleasant face, and, though it was instantly followed and dispelled by a cheerful smile, Lila was perplexed and troubled by it. Gerald's manner was equally puzzling, and once she detected tears on his cheek as he sat in the same chair with Nellie with his arm around her. She

whispered to grandpa Clare for a solution of the mystery, but he only shook his head and looked sad too.

After they went up stairs, and Nellie, who now slept with her, was undressed and in bed, she stole softly into Gerald's room. The boy sat on the floor by the window, with his head resting on a chair. There was no light in the room except the dim starlight which scarcely revealed the outline of any thing in the apartment. He was unconscious of her presence till she stood by his side, and his whole frame shook with suppressed sobs.

"O, Gerald, what is the matter? Why do grandpa and grandma look so sadly at you? Have you done any thing to make them angry?"

"No, no. They are not angry. But the day after tomorrow, Lila, Nellie and me are to go back to the city, and, and"— He could not finish the sentence.

Poor Lila! All her pleasant plans for the future were in a moment overthrown. She had become strongly attached to her childish companions; they were to her like a brother and sister; and of late she had forgotten to envy, as she used to do, the fortunate child who belonged to a numerous flock, or to pity herself as an isolated and lonely one. She had never been an unhappy child, her natural gayety prevented that; but how often she had longed for a dear sister or brother to love and to associate with! And now, when she had so nearly realized the fulfillment of these secret wishes, she could not bear with composure that they were so soon to be separated. Instead, therefore, of trying to comfort Gerald, she gave herself up to her own grief with all the force of her passionate nature. He was astonished and alarmed. He had never seen her so excited before, not even when her flowers were so wantonly destroyed by the monkey. She had appeared so light-hearted and so full of constant joyousness, that he had n't once thought it possible that she could weep.

"O! do n't, Lila," he said, "it won't be but a few years, though it does seem such a long time, and we have

never been apart in our lives, but you'll be my sister while she is away, won't you?"

She stopped weeping as suddenly as she began.

"Why, I thought you were going, too, Gerald. You said so."

"I'm coming home in a fortnight, but Nellie is to stay. She is going to school, to learn to read and write, and to do many other things. She will be gone for years, Lila."

The little girl answered cheerfully in her joy at this improved aspect of things,

"The years will soon go by, Gerald. She will come back again, and then we'll keep her here always. I'll be your sister till she comes, and afterward, too, if you want me."

Who could withstand her childish, loving manner and affectionate words? He began to look forward hopefully.

"Do n't you feel better?" she asked.

"Yes, a great deal."

"Why, it is n't half so bad as I thought. And I'm real glad if poor Nellie can learn. We must n't let her get ahead of us, though. Are you sure you've stopped crying?"

"Yes."

"Let me feel your face and see if it smiles."

Gerald laughed aloud.

"Now," continued the little girl, "I'm going back to Nellie. Let us see which will get to sleep first. The one that gets to sleep first must sing out. You won't sit here any longer in the dark, will you?"

Without waiting for an answer, she went back, singing, to her own room.

CHAPTER IX.

“Like April morning clouds, that pass
With varying shadow o’er the grass,
And imitate, on field and furrow,
Life’s checkered scene of joy and sorrow.”

It was a dull, rainy evening; dull and gloomy, and cheerless in all its features. Out of its gray depths the nervous invalid conjured a hundred frightful fancies, and many a skittish child went frightened to bed, and, hiding its head in the stifling blankets, lay sweating at the thought of tall, white-eyed, white-haired spirits, peering into key-holes, and lurking in the shadowy corners, in accordance with those true and veritable accounts to which timid children often listen with wild, staring eyes and cheeks cold and stiff with superstitious terror. It is a well-established fact in ghost literature—the ancient literature of course—that spirits choose to exhibit their invisible visages when it is too dark to distinguish a face of flesh. A stray ghost may occasionally be caught out in the moonlight, but not often. Even to the old haunted country houses they do not come with the glad sunshine. “And, indade,” says Patrick, “me and my wife are the *witnesses*, living before ye, and sorra a bit of a ghost have we ever seen at all, sure!” They never mingle their hollow voices with the merry sounds of busy daily life, but at night, when tired, honest folks would fain be asleep, they scream hoarsely down the wide chimneys, or stare with unwinking eyes through the curtainless windows. There is no reliable account that states whether it is from a morbid taste, or from mere caprice, that ghosts in general particularly fancy the murky darkness of a storm. Such is the fact, however, and with-

out controversy there was now an evening after a ghost's own heart.

The wife of the surly, bearish misanthrope, over in Eighth-street, starts timidly as she hears her husband's step in the hall, for she knows by one glance at the weather that he has come home a savage, perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

A perverse north-easter has been for a week wailing and sniveling around the city, and has finally worked itself into a passion of tears, which have been falling, drizzle, drizzle, for twenty-four mortal hours.

There has been a celebration of some sort during the day—a great attempt at rejoicing. The city is noted for its public spirit and—celebrations. They are the beginning and ending of every thing famous, and a little mushroom notoriety is sure to be inaugurated by dinners, processions, music, and frothy speeches. Happy is the individual who chances to be for a brief moment protruded like a wen from the body general of humanity!

There had been since morning the usual number of processions of miserable men in wet uniform, of unhappy bugle blowers and despairing drummers, and a great show of vindictive-looking women and rabid children. Even the bells, the good-natured bells, wont to chime so merrily on such occasions, mistook the spirit of the day, and tolled dismally, as if the plague had broken out, or an earthquake were to be apprehended. Over and above all the grim north-easter wept remorsefully as the day wore on. Taken as a whole, the day had been celebrated, though how, or wherefore, not one in ten of the damp multitude could tell. The daily press touched it up with prismatic colors, and many an eager reader in the distant towns bewailed his folly in failing to be present.

But is there nothing better than this in all the vast city—not a glimmer of true geniality amid the gloom? Let us look up some of our old friends and see.

In a neat, sunny room, too little by half, up one pair

of stairs, is a bright fire in a polished grate, and before it is a round table ready spread for the evening meal, but waiting for some one. Playing on the warm hearth-rug is a baby—fat, laughing Ally Cory—and it is Jamie who collects again and again the various toys which it is her delight to throw all over the room. Fido, the dog, helps occasionally, by bringing such round articles as seem inclined to roll away and hide in the corners, not, however, of his own accord, but because he is ordered to do so. There is one toy that Ally does not throw down with the rest; a headless, armless doll, which, having atoned by its sundry mutilations for all its offenses, is just now in favor. She is hushing it to sleep, singing to it, and hugging it, feet upward, to her fat, snowy neck.

By a lamp on the table, working busily, as of old, sits Mary. She stops and lays down her work, and quiets the children for a moment that she may listen.

"I wonder, Jamie," she says presently, "where your father is. Tell me again what the gentleman said."

"He said that father was to go to his house this evening; that he wanted to see him particularly on business. It came on so rainy father thought he had better go there before he came to supper."

"Did he say, Jamie, that he should be out late? Are you sure he did n't tell you so?"

"He said, mother, just what I told you before, that he would n't be long, and that you must n't be anxious. I hear him now, mother, on the stairs."

Before Mary could reply her husband entered, followed closely by Gerald. Jamie screamed with delight, which made little Ally scream with terror. Mary kissed him affectionately, pulling him to the light to see him better.

"Of all persons in the world, Gerald, I never thought of seeing you this stormy night. And grown so stout and hearty, too! I'm very glad to see you again, Gerald."

"You have n't altered a bit, aunty," said Gerald, looking round the room, and speaking as if he had just returned

from a long foreign voyage instead of a few weeks' absence, "every thing is just where it used to be. If Nellie were here I could forget that we had been away."

What a cordial welcome it was! Not a puff of the stern north-easter crept in to chill it. Not a shadow of the outside dreariness could stand a moment in the light of that humble fireside. Poverty had often been there; absolute want had sometimes, in the coldest Winters, stood threateningly at the threshold, but Piety trimmed her silver lamp, and the clouds melted away.

Gerald was overwhelmed with questions. How long had he been in the city? Where was Nellie? Was she contented to be separated from him? How did he like the country, and did n't his grandparents idolize them? To which Gerald replied that he had been at Elm Hill a week; that Nellie was at school; that she was homesick at first and cried sadly, but that she began to be pleased with her situation and delighted with the prospect of learning to communicate with others; that he was to return to Rose-dale on the morrow; that his grandparents did n't worship him, but would, he guessed, be glad to see him; that the country was beautiful and the snow was coming soon, and that Mr. Lewis had given him a sled and a pair of skates, which he was to take home.

Much more he told while they sat around the tea-table, and he whispered to Jamie that grandpa Clare had stored two barrels of his finest apples on purpose for them; that they would be sent in next week, accompanied with a box of nuts for Jamie's especial cracking.

After tea, when Ally was asleep, and the two boys were merrily chatting in the corner, William Cory drew his chair toward the table where his wife was busy with the never-failing needle-work.

"I've good news for you, Mary."

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed, "I forgot entirely, in the pleasure of seeing Gerald, to ask who was the gentleman you were to call on, and what he wanted of you."

"It was Mr. Lewis."

"I thought that it was him. But what did he want?"

"I am going to tell you. When I got to the house—and a grand place it is, Mary—he made me go in and sit down, as if I were a rich man. He did n't even seem to see my old clothes. He's what I call a real gentleman; none of your proud, stiff fops, too good to breathe the same air with ye, but plain and kind-spoken, as if it were a treat to him to do or say something good. And his wife, Mary, is a charming woman. She is just like him in kindness."

"Is that your good news?" interrupted Mary, laughing.

"Why, no. I shall tell you directly, if you will keep still and not be putting me out. Let me see. Where was I?"

"Admiring Mrs. Lewis, William."

"Yes, I remember now. Well, they both sat down near me, and inquired—not as if they were meddling—all about our affairs, and how we managed to live, and if I had steady work during the Winter. So I told them that I had no work that I could depend on, that I chopped wood at one place and did chores at another, and that I hardly ever had an idle day. And I told them of your sewing, Mary."

"You need n't have mentioned that, I'm sure."

"Ah, Mary, there's many a little comfort finds its way into the house that would never be here if it were not for your needle. There is no use in denying it, and it has made my heart ache often to see you so pale and weary and stitching away as busily as if you were never tired."

The tears came to Mary's eyes, but she laughed merrily.

"The news! the news, William! Am I never to hear the news? Or have you told me all?"

"I've only begun to tell. Mr. Lewis said he was sure I would do better to work for him. He said he wanted a man now to take care of his horses and to keep the green-houses in order, and in Summer to see to the flowers and shrubbery and to the grounds generally. He said that he was anxious to procure some one on whom he could depend, and that he

would allow me a good yearly salary if I would undertake it. Now, you know, Mary, I was brought up a gardener in England, and is it not a good providence that I can work at my pleasant, healthy trade again? And to have steady work too, Mary, Summer and Winter!"

"O, William, I am so glad!"

"I knew you'd be. But that is n't all. There's a good tenement close by, a cottage that Mr. Lewis has secured for no more rent than we pay here. It is n't up stairs like this. We went over it, and it seemed to me very convenient and pleasant. There is a large kitchen opening on a little garden that goes with the house. There's a good well of water close to the door. There's a bedroom opening from the kitchen, with room enough in it to serve as a little sitting-room too. There are two rooms up stairs, and presses and cupboards in every corner. And besides all, Mary, there's a parlor with white satin paper on the walls, which Mr. Lewis says he is to furnish as a present to you, Mary, who was so kind a mother to the orphan children."

"Why, surely you don't mean, William," exclaimed Mary, looking up with amazement in her face, "you're not saying that this pretty place is for us?"

"To be sure I am. What should I care about its front rooms and back rooms, if it was n't?"

Poor Mary struggled hard to preserve an outward appearance of composure, but in vain. She threw down her work and ran out of the room. But she was not gone long, and when she came back was so bright and full of fun that her husband declared that she looked as young and as handsome as on the day of her marriage.

"And one thing is decided," he added. "There's not a bit of slop-work going to our new home."

"Indeed! And when are we to move?"

"Next week, if we can get ready. Mr. Lewis said, 'The sooner the better.'"

"I can't realize it, William. It seems so new and strange, as if it were a dream."

"It is God's doing, Mary. We have remembered the poor, and he is repaying us fourfold. There are many Bible promises to those who consider the poor if we could only have believed them. 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord,' and it is never forgotten."

"But we have had so little to give to others that I never thought of its being remembered. I'm not sure of it now."

"Why, Mary! Don't you believe the Scripture, that whosoever gives but a cup of cold water shall not lose his reward?"

"Yes; but neither you nor I have ever expected a reward for all that. I'm sure that when you've been giving away victuals or old clothes you had n't an idea that you were putting money out at interest."

"That is true. But if the Bible is true I was really doing so all the time. Mary, we do n't believe half strong enough that we have a personal interest in the promises of God's Word. We look to it for spiritual comfort, but seem to think that in matters of worldly interest we must look out for ourselves. We should n't ever be anxious or worried about the future, Mary, if we steadily believed that He who is not unmindful of the sparrow's fall much more careth for us. My dear wife, let us never again distrust his providence."

Very fervent were the thanksgivings offered that night upon the humble family altar; thanksgivings mixed with lowly confessions of heart-felt unworthiness. And the wild north-easter, now roused into fury, was unheard and unthought of.

They were too grateful, too happy, to yield at once to the soothing influence of sleep, and even the boys lay awake till a late hour congratulating each other, and planning for the future, as none but boys can.

"Whenever I come to my cousin Allan's," said Gerald, "I shall see you, Jamie, in a minute. Perhaps you'll go home with me some time to Rosedale. If you do you'll see my new sister, Lila."

"I'd rather see Nellie," answered Jamie.

At last, in the midst of their chattering, the drowsy god stole up, quite unperceived by them, and kissed their eyelids, and hurried them softly away to his own dim land of dreams.

A dull gray morning succeeded to the dull gray evening. The wind had died away as if satisfied with the havoc it had made of loose clapboards and tottering chimneys, and among the shipping on the Bay. Gerald rose early to return to Elm Hill before starting for Rosedale. He did not disturb Jamie, who was sleeping soundly, but stole quietly down stairs. Mary was not up, but her husband was just kindling a fire.

"You must say good-by for me," said Gerald; "Mr. Lewis wanted me to get back early."

"Have some breakfast first. It won't hinder you long, and it's a raw, cold morning."

"No, sir, I thank you, but I have n't time. He said I must be there by six o'clock, and it's half-past five now. I shall have to run all the way."

"At any rate drink this milk. I can get some more for the baby before she wakes up."

Gerald was not hungry, but seeing that it would really please his kind friend, he hastily drank it, and bidding him good-morning, was soon hurrying along the streets. There was no rain falling now, but so dense a fog that he could hardly discover the opposite sidewalk, and every living thing seemed to borrow its mood from the weather. Dogs growled at him, and a cat spit and snarled like a demon because he inadvertently trod upon her tail. He had no time to offer any consolation, and he began to feel low-spirited and a little cross himself. He thought of Rosedale and Lila, and felt better; he thought of Nellie left in the midst of fog, and felt worse again. But his natural buoyancy conquered, the cheerful mood became permanent, and by the time he reached Elm Hill he was as gay as usual, *and enlivened them all at the breakfast-table, with his ac-*

count of the pleasure and gratitude that the Cory family felt at their improved prospects.

His journey home was partly by railroad, and the rest in a mail-stage that passed twice a week through the village near Rosedale. In the afternoon the thick clouds began to break up, and when he got out of the coach, and started on foot down the familiar lane, the setting sun shone out clear and bright, and he thought Rosedale was the loveliest place in the world.

He was not expected so soon, and he pleased himself, as he hurried along, with the idea of taking them by surprise. As he went softly up to the door he saw them, through the window, at supper, but Lila at the same moment espied him, and, with a cry of joy, threw the door wide open. They were all so glad to see him, and the old rooms looked so natural and home-like, that he told Lila that he "meant to be perfectly happy if Nellie was gone." Yet somehow the tears started to his eyes as he made this little allusion to his sister.

"I'm sure you will," replied the little girl. "O, we shall have the best times!"

"I'll tell you a secret, Gerald," said grandfather Clare, winking one eye as he spoke at Lila.

"Do n't, grandpa," she exclaimed earnestly.

"Lila has been"— Her little hand was over his mouth in an instant.

"What is it, grandma?" asked Gerald. "What has she been doing?"

"She's been moping and sighing, and"—

"O, grandma, you must n't," interrupted Lila, leaving the old man and hurrying to her side.

"She could n't eat or smile; could n't hardly speak when spoken to. 'T was because *you* were away, Gerald," shouted the old man, rising as Lila darted back again. "Say, pet, is n't it true?"

But Lila did not reply; the secret, if it were one, was all *out*, and the child, escaping from the house, hid herself so

snugly in the corner of the barn, that it was a long time before Gerald could find her and coax her back to the house again. Farmer Clare had teased her every day of Gerald's absence with the dismal account to be given him on his return, and her eyes were swollen with weeping.

"Why do you cry so, Lila?" said the boy. I'm sure I was ever so sorry to be gone from you, and I don't care who knows it. And I am so glad, too, to see my sister Lila again!"

"Are you, really?" said the child, brightening up.

"I'm as glad as can be. Grandpa is only in fun. I would n't mind his laughing. I know he's as glad as we are. Will you sing this evening, Lila? I heard some blind children sing while I was gone. Every body said it was beautiful, but your voice is better than theirs. Cousin Allan says it is the sweetest voice he ever heard."

"How can he say so? He hears all the famous singers."

"He thinks so, I suppose. He sings himself, and plays on the organ, too. My mamma used to sing, but I can't even think a tune. I could never learn if I should try. Sing, Lila, the song you sung when we were riding—about the blue sky, and the purple mountains, and the singing waters. Here are grandpa and grandma come to hear you."

They sat around the bright fireside without candles, and the blaze of the red logs cast its flickering all over the walls and ceiling, and afforded light for the old lady to knit by.

The child's clear voice filled the room; sweet and full in its loudest tones, and soft as the lightest bird-note in its unstudied, natural cadence. She seemed wholly insensible of the effect she was producing, but sung as if alone, giving her whole soul to the expression of the melody. As the song went on the expression of her face varied with every change of the sentiment, and at last she stood up with clasped hands, and chanted reverently an evening hymn to the Deity, full of earnest, humble petition and sublime ascriptions of praise.

"Where *did* you learn that?" asked grandma, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Is it not beautiful?"

"Yes, but where did you get it?"

"There was a poor Englishman who died in the house where I lived with mamma. I learned it of him. Mamma liked it, and I sung it very often while she lived. I've never sung it since she died till now."

CHAPTER X.

"O, precious compensation to the dumb,
To write his wants and wishes!"

It was a great day with Nellie when she was able to indite and to write with her own hand a letter to Gerald. After it was finished she could hardly bring her mind to consent to its being sent off, and it was not folded till all of the teachers had read it, and gratified her innocent vanity by admiring it.

It was a great day, too, at Rosedale when it reached its destination. It was Nellie's first letter, her first regular communication of thought to them. It came when Gerald and Lila were at school, and was accompanied by a little box wrapped in paper and sealed tightly, and by a short note from Mr. Lewis expressing great satisfaction in the rapid improvement of their little grandchild.

Farmer Clare and his wife read the name on the wrapper of the box and the superscription of the letter at least a dozen times in the course of the afternoon. They were quite impatient to know the contents, but they did not gratify their curiosity as many parents and grandparents would have done, for they knew that Gerald would naturally like to break the seal himself, and have the first sight of what was written on purpose for him. But it seemed a long time to wait. Was n't the school keeping much later than usual? Grandma Clare went twice to see if the old clock in the kitchen had not stopped. No, it was ticking away slowly, steadily, as if there was not the least occasion in the world for haste, and the old lady called it a "lazy old laggard" right to its venerable face.

At last she saw the children loitering slowly along the

lane, and stopping short occasionally by the little pools of water left by the April showers, to sail a miniature boat that Gerald had, with rather more perseverance than ingenuity, constructed the night before.

"I must say," said grandma Clare, watching them through her spectacles—"I must say he's a heartless boy. If I had a sweet sister like Nellie, who had been away a year and a half, I do believe I should hurry a little to hear from her."

"No doubt of it, Molly," said the farmer, "especially if you had no suspicion of there being any news awaiting you. Eh, Molly?"

"Well, I'd forgotten that, to be sure. But do, John, go and hurry them along."

"They're coming now, running as if they knew all about it. A bird of the air has carried the news. Ah, they're stopped again by the bridge. They want deeper water to sail their boat. They'll hear now if you call them from the door."

Farmer Clare spoke the truth; they would have heard at three times the distance.

"There's something the matter," said Lila, turning quite pale, "grandma never'd call like that for nothing."

"We'll run in and see. Don't be so frightened. No matter about the boat; I'll run down and get it by and by."

"'T will float away. O, Gerald, you hurry in first! I'll bring the boat. O, what can be the matter!" exclaimed poor Lila, half crying.

Gerald ran breathlessly, as if chased by a bear, up the hill and into the house. It was now his grandmother's turn to get frightened.

"What on earth ails you, Gerald?" she exclaimed, seizing him by the arm. "You look like a scared owl. Has Lila fallen into the brook?"

"No, grandma, here she comes."

"And as white as a sheet, too. Why, what has happened? Did you see a ghost in the brook? Here, Lila,

drink some water. And now, Gerald, in the name of common-sense, what is it all about?"

"You frightened us, grandma. We thought something dreadful had happened to make you scream so."

The old folks burst into a loud laugh, which had at least the happy effect of removing the children's fears and of restoring the color to their lips and cheeks. But they still looked puzzled.

"Well, I must say you are a bright pair to get scared out of your wits at nothing. I wanted to hurry you. I've got something to show you. Only think, Gerald, a box and a letter from Nellie—a letter written by herself!"

"Are you sure," asked the boy eagerly—"are you sure she wrote it?"

"You can open it and see. It is directed in *such* a crooked little hand! Sit down here, on the lounge, and let us all hear. Dear little Nellie! Why, how your eyes shine, Gerald! There, we are all ready."

Gerald opened the letter, and, having ascertained that the inside was written in just such quaint little characters as the outside, proceeded to read it aloud:

INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB, }
NEW YORK, APRIL 20TH.

MY LOVED BROTHER GERALD,—It's me that's writing to you—your darling sister Nellie. I am well, and my face smiles all the time. I learn much. The teachers are kind. They love me, and one said that I was a very good girl. They teach me of God and to be good. I love them, but most of all I love you. Beautiful it shall be to kiss you once more! When shall I see you? I walk to my cousin's house many times. Little Harry is mischief. I see James Cory, and the small child, and their mamma and papa too. Them I love. Sometimes I love not little Harry. He is too much mischief. He pulls my curls. I send you a picture I created. I send flowers too for Lila, made, some by me, and the teacher helped. My letter is to all, and

to you the most. It is the first whole letter I have wrote. When shall a letter be made by you for me?

I am your darling sister,

ELLEN CAMERON.

It would be wholly in vain to attempt to describe the pleasure that Nellie's first simple letter gave to her friends. They felt that she was no longer isolated from social companionship with the world around by her infirmity. The drawing that accompanied the letter was a pretty but imperfect sketch of a church and park near Elm Hill. Gerald recognized the view at once. The flowers were of wax, quite small, and in a little glass case. They were perfect in the eyes of their inexperienced admirers, and were viewed over and over again with a pleasurable interest that never tired, for were they not evidences of the taste and skill of dear Nellie? By universal consent they were placed in a conspicuous position on the mantle, in the little parlor, where they would be sure to be observed by all visitors. It was several days before they could be depended on as fixtures, for they were taken down so often to be admired that the old lady declared that they would be worn out by the frequent examinations.

Lila hid in the garret and wrote a little poem about them, and then burnt it up. She had scribbled rhymes ever since she could use her pen, even before she was taught to write, copying, for the purpose, the printed letters of the "Child's Primer." No one but Gerald knew it. He was her sole literary confidant, and often begged hard for the possession of such verses as he particularly liked, but Lila was bent on destroying them, lest by accident others of more mature judgment should peruse and ridicule them.

The child was half inclined, at times, to be ashamed of the enthusiasm and poetry of her nature, for she was sensible that she differed greatly from the children who surrounded her at school, and from all the little girls of her own age who came sometimes to spend the Saturday's half-holiday at Rosedale. She soon discovered that they did not sympathize in her feelings of pleasure when a new feature of the

landscape or a rare flower of the forest presented itself, and all the sweet imaginings so beautiful to her, were wholly incomprehensible to them. So she gradually became shy and silent when in their society, and tried hard to drape her fancies with the sober curtain of reality ; but when alone with Gerald, she was free and unrestrained, portraying, often in language far above her years, the witching romance of her ideal world. She felt that he understood her. Without the power to originate a beautiful picture himself, he had yet an exquisite perception of its harmonious shading and coloring, and of the grace and loveliness of its design. This perception was not acquired—he had no name for it in his own mind—but it made him a fitting companion for the delicate and precocious child, tempering, as it did, her boundless enthusiasm.

At school she committed her lessons apparently without effort, all except arithmetic. She evidently had no taste for mathematics, and her slate was often covered with juvenile poetry instead of the dry calculations assigned her. The excellence of her first compositions was remarked by the teacher, who greatly encouraged her one day by saying, as he returned a short sketch,

“It is very finely written for a girl of your age. Persevere, and the world will one day prize what you write.”

Such was Lila—making up by the exquisite loveliness of her mental development for the want of personal beauty.

The years rolled on, noiselessly but surely ; never taking a step backward to accommodate the loiterer, or to give time to the most enterprising, but tirelessly pursuing their course, and steadily spreading open the doubtful pages of the future.

Gerald was now a stout, manly boy of fifteen. The time allotted to Nellie’s absence had expired, and she had come home to Rosedale. How swiftly the years had flown ! It seemed but a few months since Gerald had summoned all the energy of his boyish heart to enable him to part with her. He was very glad of it now.

She had only been to Rosedale occasionally for a visit—only once in a year to stay a few weeks—but how many pleasant hours were now in store for them! Her letters to him, so broken in language at first, had gradually improved as her knowledge increased, and now her beautiful thoughts came clothed in correct English, as pure as themselves.

She came back in some respects quite unaltered—the same slight figure, a little taller, the same happy, sweet face, the same profusion of soft curls, the same affectionate sister; but no longer helpless, no longer dependent even, but strong in the wisdom she had gained, and joyous in the use of the new means of enjoyment that her education had given her. There was much for her yet to learn, but the key of knowledge had been placed in her hand.

Gerald had changed considerably in person. His hair was now much darker than hers, and his figure far more robust. A stranger would have pronounced him two or three years older. He had diligently improved all the advantages given him of becoming a scholar; he had for two years been studying under the tuition of the parish clergyman, who now pronounced him fit to enter the University. But farmer Clare would not hear of that.

“Go to college!” said he, almost indignantly; “it is perfect nonsense. Pray, Gerald, get that foolish idea out of your head. What do you want of more learning? You’ve got more than you need now.”

“But he has such a taste for study, grandpa,” said Lila—for Gerald made no reply except by his disappointed looks—“it is a pity for him to have to stop now, and Mr. Lewis will help him a great deal, I am sure he will.”

“We don’t want any more help,” said the old man. “We want a little independent feeling the most of any thing. You’re big enough now to be of some use, Gerald; I am growing old and need you on the farm. Besides, you’ve got book learning enough; too much, if it makes *you feel above working for a living.*”

There were tears in Gerald's eyes, for his grandfather had never spoken so harshly to him before.

"When I was young," continued the farmer, "the district school was considered all-sufficient. Society turned out as bright men then as now—much better politicians; some that were honest, which can't be said now. I've always got along and held my own, without half as much book-learning as you have. Besides, it costs something to go through college. Neither you or I have any thing to throw away in that manner, and as to receiving any more aid from Lewis after all he's done, why, that would be a disgrace to us both. No, no, no! Let us hear of no more such foolish plans."

Gerald felt as if the whole world was shrouded in mourning. His darling hopes were crushed at once. To his grandmother he could not look for encouragement, for the good woman had never dreamed of opposing the unalterable decrees of her husband. And she knew, from long experience, that in matters conflicting with his expressed will his obstinacy was as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. But Lila whispered of hope. She threw sunbeams all over the dark clouds, and spanned the gloomy future with rainbows of promise. There would be some way, she was sure. He was too good, too talented in her estimation, to fail of success at last. There was comfort, too, in Nellie's cordial sympathy, and there was courage in the sweet language of her flying fingers and eloquent looks.

He did not give up his studies. A corner of the garret was fitted up with shelves to hold the few books that he possessed, and by the aid of sundry props and nails, a superannuated old light-stand was made to serve as a writing-desk. The good clergyman had hitherto supplied him with books, but, unfortunately for Gerald, he now removed to a distant town, and a stranger came to take his place. So it was, perforce, a very unpretending little library that graced the new shelves, and with almost every volume he was

already familiar. What, then, was he to study? Very discouraging were the feelings that the first survey of his studio suggested; not even Lila's hopeful plans and good wishes could disguise the fact of his present meager resources.

Mr. Lewis had not forgotten Gerald's desire to be a scholar. Unknown to the boy, he had held many conversations with the old man on the subject, and was grieved and indignant at the narrow views that he generally expressed.

Good and kind-hearted as the farmer was, he was, after all, one of those self-complacent beings who are born into the world knowing all things, and who have, therefore, but a slight regard for the limited wisdom of less fortunate people. He was like the tuneless deacon who *would* sing in meeting, "dreadfully set in his way," and it often happened that his way differed from other people's ways.

Knowing these traits of his character, and also his sturdy independence, it must be confessed that Allan Lewis had very little faith in exercise while pleading for Gerald. Indeed, he had often been quite astonished at his success in regard to Nellie. Probably the poor child's misfortune, added to her remarkable likeness to the unfortunate Lucy, had for once conquered that iron will.

Allan came often to Rosedale. His old grandmother was dead, and business in reference to the property she had left required his presence at L. Sometimes he was accompanied by his wife and Harry, but he came oftenest alone. He felt a deep interest in the welfare of the orphans, but his pertinacity in discussing Gerald's educational prospects had, of late, secured for him a rather cool welcome from the farmer, who began to consider him a regular "thorn in the flesh."

He really wished, he said, that Mr. Lewis would go back to town and mind his own business. What right had he to be always in *his* path? If he were plowing or planting, or mending his fence, or ever so busily engaged, it made no difference, he seemed to be always haunted by his presence *and his arguments*.

Allan, on his part, thought the old man was totally blind, even to his own interest. He thought of Gerald's early trials, of his manly spirit and talents, and of his love for study, till he felt that Mr. Clare *must*, somehow or other, be gained over, and he returned to the charge with new zeal. But the old farmer still harped on his one string; he *never* would consent to the boy's incurring new obligations, or to his involving himself in debt. The learning he had already obtained only made him discontented, and as to helping him to get any more, he had n't any money to throw away.

Mr. Lewis, at last, made no reply. He felt so chafed and indignant that he dared not trust himself to speak, lest he should forget the reverence due to old age; so one day, after an unusually-exciting interview, he turned slowly away and sauntered down the hill to the lane where he had left his carriage.

"It is of no use," he muttered to himself; "I must give it up. It's only a waste of breath to talk with him about it. The more I say, the more fixed he is. A contrary old fellow! I was a fool to bring the children here at all. I might have educated them as I pleased. Ah, well," he sighed, "it is too late to repent now, but it's too bad! too bad!"

As he got over the fence into the road he was startled by a low voice near him. It was Lila, courtesying, and blushing excessively as his eye fell on her.

"Ah, Lila, is it you?"

She colored still more as she tried to speak, and stammered and hesitated painfully.

"You want to speak to me," he said, pleasantly. "Is it about yourself?"

"No. O no, sir!"

"You want to ask something for Nellie, perhaps?"

His kind tone reassured her.

"No, sir. If you please, it's for Gerald."

"For Gerald! And what does Gerald want?"

"He do n't know of it yet, sir."

"Indeed! Well, never mind that, my dear; tell me what it is."

"You know, sir," said Lila, earnestly, "how much he wants to get an education?"

"Yes."

"And how much grandpa opposes it?"

"Yes, Lila, I know that, too."

"He studies very hard, sir, when he gets time. He is never idle. Mr. Lowe, our old minister, sir, says he knows enough now to enter college. And his time to go will come some time; I'm sure it will."

Mr. Lewis watched with amazement the sudden lighting up of her countenance. Every feature was beaming with an expression of triumph and delight.

"What makes you think so, Lila? Who can overcome all these provoking obstacles?"

"Our Father!" she replied, reverently raising her eyes to the blue sky. For a moment she was beautiful; but her timidity and confusion returned as she met Allan's admiring gaze.

"I forgot," she stammered; "I wanted to speak to you about Gerald. Do you think, sir, he would have to spend four years in college, if he learns before going a part of what he would have to study there?"

"Of course not. He would enter an advanced class if he were qualified to do so."

"And if he is to be a physician, as I know he would choose to be, is it necessary, sir, for him to go through college before beginning to study medicine?"

"No, not absolutely necessary. It would n't hurt him, though. But, my little catechiser, you did n't come out just to ask these questions. The main thing, I see, is in the dark yet. Let us have it at once."

"If he had books," returned the child—"if he only had books he would learn very fast."

"Ah! that is the secret, then. You want me to send him some books, do you?"

Lila smiled brightly and nodded her head.

"I understand. Well, that is easily done. What books does he need?"

"I don't know any thing about it, sir. I suppose he needs such as they use first in college. He has put some shelves up in the garret. He has a chair and table there, and Nellie and I have made a curtain to draw around it all, and we call it "the study." But he has so few books, and he knows them almost by heart, too."

"Well, well! I'll see to it. You can tell him so."

"O, no! Please, sir, do not let him know I asked."

He could not help smiling at her earnest looks.

"The important secret shall be kept safe so long as you wish," he answered; "but if I were he I should suspect the truth. Now, Lila, let me hear one of those sweet songs."

She hesitated and looked toward the house.

"T will pay for the books, Lila."

"It must be a very short one, sir, for I know that grandma wants me. Hark! I hear her calling now."

"So she is. Well, hurry in; I shall remember all that Gerald wants. Good-by."

He kissed the little girl as if he had been her father, and as he drove slowly away he more than once turned round to get another glimpse of her light figure as she tripped up the hill.

"I'll think of *her* wants, too, while I'm about it," he said to himself. "What a lovely child! Half spirit and half sunshine, and sings like a mocking-bird! Not a particle of selfishness about her! Well, the old man has got enough for all the family. He won't prevent my sending down what I please to any of them. It is my opinion, now, that Gerald will have books—all that he desires."

It was just a week after this interview, when, one morning, as Lila and Nellie were standing under the trees in front of the house, they descried a strange horse and cart coming slowly through the lane. Lila's heart throbbed quickly, for

she thought of the books. Gerald, who was chopping wood in the back yard, came round when he heard the wheels strike on the bridge, and grandmother Clare left her ironing in the kitchen to see who was coming. The horse and cart soon reached the house, and the driver asked, in a loud, harsh tone, if farmer Clare resided there. On being told that he did, he bade Gerald call the old man to assist him in unloading his cart. He was so short and crusty in his speech that Gerald was half inclined to let him unload it by himself, but his better nature prevailed, and he offered to assist, as his grandfather was absent. The man made no objection, so they proceeded to take out a large box strongly corded. Gerald saw his name on the cover, and very naturally inquired of the man what it contained.

"I can't tell you. All I know is that it's confounded heavy. Here's a smaller box that you can take in alone."

"It's for Nellie!" exclaimed Gerald.

"Like enough. Just take hold of this, will you? 'T will take us both, I reckon, to get this into the house. Stuffed with lead, I believe."

The man looked so tired and cross that Gerald did not care to reply.

"There's another box yet, larger than either of these," said the driver. "I do n't know how we shall manage it. It's clumsy to handle, and the gentleman said I was to take great care of it. 'T an't heavy, so you need n't be afraid, young sir."

There was a card tacked to the box. Gerald climbed into the cart and read aloud: "For Lila. Not to be opened till I come on Friday. A. Lewis."

As soon as it was out of the cart and safely deposited in the wide front entry, the man drove rapidly away, not even condescending to reply to grandma Clare's invitation to take some refreshment.

Great was the wonder and interest excited by the boxes; especially by Lila's. The child could n't remember having had a present in her life, except when some rare opportunity

had enabled her rough, sailor-father to send home some foreign trinket. No one being able to make a reasonable guess as to the nature of its contents, they decided to leave it and open the others. Nellie's was first unpacked. It was like a little museum. It first displayed a bonnet. This, it was evident, was for some one else, and a little ticket on the front declared it a present for grandma. On a recent visit to Rosedale Mr. Lewis had accidentally overheard grandma and Lila discussing the possibility of turning, and cleansing, and remaking the old lady's Sunday bonnet.

Under the bonnet Nellie found books and papers, a quantity of fine drawings, and materials for drawing and for fancy-work—worsted and silks of all shades and designs for fine embroidery on muslin and cambric. At the bottom was a small rosewood writing-desk, furnished with pens, ink-stand, penknife, paper-weight and paper-folders. In a corner of this was a small package which had so many wrappers that Lila declared that there was nothing at all inside. But Nellie persevered in unfolding it, and at last was rewarded by bringing to light a small gold miniature case. She trembled violently as she touched the spring, and, holding it up for a moment for Gerald to see, she clasped it to her bosom and burst into tears.

"It's mamma's likeness!" exclaimed Gerald. "Father stole it from poor Nellie to get rum. Where did cousin Allan find it?"

It was some time before Nellie became composed; longer yet before she could bear to trust her recovered treasure in other hands than her own. Grandma Clare's tears were mingled with hers, as she gazed once more upon the sweet features so dear to her—as she recognized the bridal dress and jewels in which poor Lucy had been attired when she last beheld her.

Gerald's box was next examined. He could scarcely believe his eyes. He saw the very books he needed—text-books of the languages and mathematics, and a noble collection of select reading.

"They are too nice, my dear," said grandma, "to be consigned to the garret. Do n't you think so?"

"It will be more convenient to have them there. And I can keep them neater. If they are in the parlor every body that comes in will feel under obligation to handle them. Besides, grandma, I must study there in order to be retired."

"Well, well, my dear, arrange them to suit yourself."

Farmer Clare frowned when he saw the rich presents that had arrived during his absence, but Nellie showed him the recovered miniature, and he said nothing. He was quite softened for the time, and even looked upon his wife's new bonnet without expressing disapprobation. Gerald looked so bright and happy when he came down to tea, that the old man forgot to speak, as he had intended, of their increased obligations to Mr. Lewis; and after a few moments he found, to his great mortification, that a serious homily, which he had been for a week concocting and perfecting in his brain on his favorite theme, "independence," had entirely escaped from his memory, without leaving a trace behind.

Lila could n't eat any supper; she would n't even try. She was continually skipping up stairs to peep at the famous library, then running down again to kiss Nellie, whose delight was of a more tranquil character, and did not affect her appetite. On each of these flying visits grandma Clare became more and more positive that the child was bewitched, for little snatches of song went ringing through the house, filling all the old rooms with melody. At last she sat down by herself on a bench under the great trees, and then they hushed their breath so as not to lose a tone or a word of her happy song.

It was wonderful, Lila's strange, sweet gift—never acquired, but born with her, growing and strengthening with her growth, maturing without culture or attention, like the wild flowers in the forest; with its first notes confining itself to old familiar melodies, but soon, as if these were

insufficient to express her feelings, giving utterance to her own imaginings, improvising both the poetry and the music.

When she first came to Rosedale these occasions were frequent, and although the old people did not suspect her of originating the melody that charmed them, they were not insensible to the deep feeling that seemed to thrill her whole being as she sung. Even then her songs would hardly have been ranked with childish compositions, for, from the first, both the rhythm and rhyme of her verses were perfect. Whatever might have been thought of the ideas she expressed or of the childish imagery employed, the measure was always true and regular as the old kitchen clock that ticked away so solemnly.

As she grew older and saw that, in the possession of this talent, she differed from other children, it was only on rare occasions like the present, and when greatly excited, that the imprisoned spirit of song obtained for a time its former freedom.

Thus, then, she sang on that happy evening, her face glowing with its expression of beautiful thought, and her eyes never wandering from the golden sunset clouds. The rest of the family stood silently grouped in the door-way, and the bright birds, in their leafy orchestra over her head, hushed their own carols and listened. Gerald was perfectly sure that night that Lila was handsome.

He rose early the next morning to study. At first he found a disadvantage in possessing so many books, for he found it difficult to settle to any particular one. He took down and examined volume after volume, and replaced them admiringly on the shelves, till, reminded by the striking of the clock that time was not waiting for him, he decided to put all away but the text-books he needed and to go to work regularly. The moments were indeed all winged, for he had hardly got thoroughly interested when a pale face, with dull, lusterless eyes, peered through the opening of the curtain, and a low, languid voice announced

that breakfast was ready. No more study till evening. And the evenings so short, too !

"In a minute, Lila," he said, without raising his eyes ; "tell grandma not to wait."

Lila still lingered, her pale face and spiritless eyes brightening as she glanced around. She was suffering from headache and lassitude, the consequent reaction of the excitement of the previous evening.

"Come, Gerald !" she said, "you've forgotten already ; the breakfast is waiting."

He started up a little impatiently, but a glance at Lila's face softened him instantly. So pale and yet so full of interest in his studies !

"Ah, Gerry," she said, "we shall never see you now. When you're not at work you'll always be shut up here. It will be so pleasant to study all these books that you'll forget even dear Nellie."

"No, I sha'n't, nor even dear Lila either. I wonder if you could n't help me to guess how cousin Allan happened to think of sending out these books. Ah, Lila, there's something more than chance about it, I'm sure ! There, I will not speak of it if it annoys you. Only I am very grateful to you, my dear sister."

"Are you coming to breakfast ?"

"Yes. And I'm going to L. after breakfast, and you and Nellie can go too if grandma is willing. That is, if you are well enough," he added, seeing her press her hand to her forehead.

"My head aches, but the ride will cure me. It always makes me well to ride."

"As, for instance, when we went to the city."

"Ah, but that was so different ! Hot streets, and dust, and noise. I was better then as soon as we came into the open country where there was room for a daisy to grow."

"You are as pale now as you were then. I am sure you are ill," said Gerald, earnestly. "Let me carry you down stairs."

"Yes, if you can catch me," she returned, laughing merrily at the proposal, and bounding away in the old fairy style, skipping over two or three stairs at a time, and only stopping to wait for him when she arrived at the kitchen door.

At the breakfast-table there were innumerable guesses made as to the contents of Lila's box. Nellie suggested quite a variety of things in her pretty, silent language, such as dresses, bonnets, shawls, laces, ribbons, and gloves.

The old lady was sure that Nellie had guessed wide of the mark, unless Allan expected her to open a country store. For her part she thought it far more likely to contain a quantity of plain sewing for which Lila was to be paid.

The child's face lengthened on hearing this, for she was not yet remarkable for her attachment to her needle, but Gerald reassured her by saying that he was sure that cousin Allan would n't have sent any thing if he had n't been certain of pleasing her.

"Perhaps," guessed Gerald, "it is a pretty toilet-table or work-stand."

"They are all wrong, pet," said the old man. "Now, I knew, as soon as I saw that box, what there was in it. I wonder that grandma has n't guessed it out."

"Well, what is it? What do you think it is?" asked Lila.

"Of course, Lila, Mr. Lewis has heard that farmer Bradford's Zeno is here to see you every morning."

Grandpa Clare had rallied Lila about Zeno ever since she came to Rosedale, and the joke, whatever it was, always seemed fresh to him.

"No doubt he has seen him lolling on the barn-yard gate, admiring the little milkmaid."

Lila looked a little vexed, but she laughed with the rest, and asked, good-naturedly, "Do you think Zeno is in the box, grandpa?"

"Not exactly. Lewis is looking ahead. He knows what it costs to well-furnish a dairy. So he has sent down a

cheese-press, a new kind I should judge, from the size of the box. It is a bridal present."

Quite a chorus of laughter greeted this sage surmise.

"Now, Lila, it's your turn to guess."

"I guess it is a cage to keep bears in."

This reply renewed the mirth, for it was remembered that when Lila first saw farmer Clare she had remarked, with great simplicity, "He looks like my picture of a bear."

Grandma made no objections to Gerald's being accompanied to L. by the two girls. She noticed Lila's extreme paleness, and thought a ride would do her good. But she ran down the lane and called to Gerald twice after they had started, to be sure not to drive the old mare too fast.

"There's no great danger of it, grandma," he replied. "It's next to impossible to make her trot. It will be hard work to navigate her there and back again if I do my best."

"Be careful in turning around, Gerald; it's never safe to turn short."

"O, I'll be careful! Now, don't worry, grandma; I'm sure there's no need of it. All I am afraid of is, that we shall be a week on the road, and shall take cold camping out."

"Well, the old saying is true as the Gospel," said the old lady, as they drove merrily away, "that them that know nothing fear nothing."

Lila's headache soon disappeared under the magical influence of the sunlight and clear air. All her usual buoyancy of spirit returned. The slow pace of the old mare enabled her to observe and point out to her companions the tiniest flowers by the wayside; and once she coaxed Gerald to stop a long time in a little patch of green wood, while she admired the delicate, blushing flowers of the trailing arbutus, that crept away among the gray lichens, or shone out like stars from the green moss by the clear, little spring. She would not let him cut a single bud to take away.

"It would be cruel," she said, "to make the fair blos-

soms droop, or to take them from their cool, shadowy home. See, Gerald ! how the shade leaves tremble all over the turf ! Let me stay here till you come back. I shall not be lonesome. The wild bees and humming-birds will come as soon as you are gone. Let me stay. "I will be so much better than the dusty street."

"No, no, no !" replied Gerald, laughing ; "a nice trimming would grandma give me if any harm should befall you. If I leave you to yourself you will tempt back your old tormentor, the headache, and be sick to-morrow when cousin Allan comes to open the mysterious box. Come, sister Nellie is tired, and you can dream of flowers, and bees, and bugs, and fowls after we get started."

"We'll go round by the post-office," said the child, when they were once more in motion ; "who knows but we may get news of poor papa ?"

"Yes ; we'll go home that way, if there's time. I would n't expect any letter, though."

"If I only knew for certain what has become of him I could be easy. But it is dreadful to imagine that he is drowned, or perhaps eaten by cannibal Indians, like the poor fellows you read of last week. Sometimes I fancy, till I'm almost sure it is true, that he lives like Crusoe, on an island by himself, and I dreamed once that I saw his hut and his goats, and that I was there to serve him in the place of Friday. O, would n't it be delightful, Gerald, if my dream could come true ?"

"I do n't know about that," he replied. "Rosedale would hardly be Rosedale if you were gone. I am afraid I should be selfish enough to wish that Robinson Crusoe had kept his island to himself. But, Lila, have you forgotten all those stories that we read together last Winter, about sailors who were shipwrecked, and who came back suddenly to their friends, after every body had given them up ?"

"It is three years, Gerald, since the last letter came. And even then nothing came to pay all the cost I've been to grandpa. And it makes me so unhappy to know that he

has to work hard now, when he is an old man, and that he might oftener rest if it were not for me."

Lila turned away her head, but not soon enough to hide the tears that were rapidly coursing down her cheeks. Nellie put her arm affectionately around her and looked wonderingly to her brother for an explanation.

"I am sure, Lila," he said, and his voice trembled in spite of himself, "that grandma and grandpa never think of any expense in keeping you. You are as dear to them as Nellie is. It was only yesterday morning that I heard grandma say that it was a gracious Providence that sent you to Rosedale. She said that if you were not here she would be obliged to hire a stranger to help her, and even then, she said, no one else would adopt all her particular ways, or take pains to carry out her economical plans, or be half so thoughtful and affectionate as her own Lila. She said, Lila, that you were worth your weight in gold to her, and grandpa, who loves you so dearly, spoke up and said, 'Yes, to be sure.'"

It was curious to observe the effect of this little speech upon Lila. She brightened all over, her cheeks and eyes were perfectly radiant, and she did what she had been too timid to do since they were quite small children, clasped her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek. It was evident that a great weight had been removed from her mind.

There is nothing more annoying—more particularly wearing to a sensitive person, than a feeling of dependence. To feel, after one's best efforts to be useful, that we are yet accounted burdensome, is a species of suffering that might well have been employed by Satan to test the patient endurance of Job.

CHAPTER XI.

"For a letter timely writ is a rivet to the chain of affection,
And a letter untimely delayed is as rust to the solder."

ON their way home they called at the post-office. They were obliged to wait some time before the postmaster could be found, and at last were waited on by his wife, he being, unfortunately, too drunk to understand their wishes.

There was no letter. Lila had not expected there would be, yet she looked wistfully at the little pile of papers and letters, as if hardly sure that the epistle she so earnestly desired was not lurking somewhere among them. She was leaving the office rather despondently, when a chubby, dirty, ragged little boy, shoeless and hatless, burst into the room, and, without noticing who might be present, bawled out at the top of his voice,

"The letther! The letther, misthress! Has the letther come?"

"Who cares whether it has come or no?" was the ungracious reply.

"And it's me that cares, and me mother, and Jemmy O'Neale, and a nation more, an ye plaze," said the boy, beginning to whistle.

"I told you yesterday, and the day before that; I've told you a week," said the woman, raising her voice, "that when a letter comes for your mother I'll send it down. Now, why do n't you keep away?"

"And is n't she wanting the letther whin it coomes, long before ye're like to sind it, indade? An, ye'll tell whin it'll come, leddy Glenn, honey, it's me that'll stay at home till then."

"How should I know, you little fool? I do n't think

it'll come at all, if that's any comfort. It won't come any sooner for your racing here and howling about it every time the mail comes in. Only *you* stay at home, and I'll send Sal down with it directly it shows itself. Tell your mother that it won't take hurt if she do n't get it under five minutes. But mind now, you young plague, you keep away."

"I shall come again to-morrow," said the boy, and his eyes twinkled as if there were rare fun in coming—"to-morrow, misthress."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the woman, angrily, "come if you will. See if you do n't catch it, though! I'll send you home with a flea in your ear, if I live."

"Small nade o' that, shure. And it's plinty and shpry are that same in the shanty at home. Och! and here are the lively bastes playing ketch on me own father's shirt-slave, that was. Look, mother Blue!"

"Get out! scat! O you young imp!" exclaimed the now furious postmistress, seizing a broom and darting out after the young offender, who had taken to his heels as soon as he had provoked her beyond endurance.

Lila had got into the wagon, but they waited a moment to see the result. The boy kept just far enough from his antagonist to be beyond the reach of her broom, so that all the vigorous blows intended for him just failed of their object, and descended harmlessly upon the ground. They were evidently old enemies. He did his best to provoke her, dancing, whooping, and snapping his fingers, or laughing boisterously at her ineffectual efforts to lay hold of him. She was a large, broad-shouldered woman, an Amazon in height and strength. Well was it for Irish Mat that his superior agility enabled him to keep in advance. A single unlucky stumble, and he would have been slow in future to awaken her wrath. She soon gave up the unequal chase, and came back to her door literally breathing out threatening and slaughter.

"I'll catch him yet," she panted, as she came up and sat down on the broad step to breathe, "and I would n't give

much for his chance then. It's likely, now, that I'm going to be tormented every day by that little fright, when every body knows how my old man, Tommy Higgins, has to toe the mark. I'd hire Jim to thrash the young rascal, only it would be so delicious," said the woman, smacking her lips—"so delicious to do it myself. No, no, I'll get no help. I'll wait a bit. But if I do n't curry his freckled hide handsomely one of these days, my name an't Betsy Higgins. And what are you staring at?" she asked, suddenly becoming aware that Gerald had not driven away.

"I beg your pardon," said Gerald, stammering, "we waited to see how the boy came out."

"Come out! *If* the devil had n't helped his own he would n't have come out with a whole skin. You just tell farmer Clare to learn his children to mind their own business before he sends them here again."

"Do drive on," said Lila.

"I did not mean to offend you," said Gerald.

"No doubt. You thought it was mighty polite to sit there, like a nest of owls, staring at other people's concerns. An't you the bright young chap who studied Latin with the old minister, so as to know enough to work on a farm?"

"Do drive on, Gerald," urged Lila.

"O no," said the woman, "do n't drive on. Sit there and stare. You're sort o' stylish, I take it. I remember the old man would n't let you play at school with my Jim and Sal. Well, the old wood castle at Rosedale is stylish, and the family chariot," pointing to the old farm wagon, "is stylish, and the lean sheep that draws it is stylish, too. Such stylish folks can't help being mannerly."

Here Lila, in despair at Gerald's lingering, seized the whip and gave the old mare such a hearty blow, that she reared and turned, and actually cantered a couple of rods in the direction of home before she got over the sudden impulse.

"What could possess you, Gerald!" exclaimed Lila, "to wait so? I expected every minute that she'd spring into the wagon."

"Why, it was so strange to see her. She is mad with the whole world, I believe. And, besides, I wanted to apologize, for it was n't very polite in us, Lila, to stay and watch them."

"I do n't know. In the city they would have had a crowd of spectators. If she had caught him she would n't have cared about our waiting. But, see! There's grandma in the door watching for us. She will say that we've been gone long enough to go to Newburg. There's some one with her—a lady. Hurry, and let us see who it is."

"Hurry! If I could turn a crank and work this horse along we might talk of hurrying. Never mind, Lila, such stylish folks, you know, should move with dignity."

"Such owls, you mean," she returned, laughing at the remembrance of Mrs. Higgins's comparisons.

Grandmother Clare came out to meet them, accompanied by another old lady, who, though considerably younger than herself, had a strong family likeness to her.

"It is aunt Ruth, children," said grandma, who observed with great pleasure and no little pride the impression made on her sister by Nellie's uncommon beauty and Gerald's graceful manliness. Lila, so small and plain, was for the time quite overlooked, as she timidly tried to escape observation.

They had all heard again and again of aunt Ruth. She was the only sister of their grandmother, who had beguiled many a long Winter evening by narrating their joint exploits at huskings, apple-bees, and quiltings in the palmy days when they were young. Such sleigh rides and singing schools as graced that dear olden time had never entered the imagination of modern man; and the eyes and mouths of her youthful auditors had often watered as she described the ancient merry-makings held in the old school—evening spelling schools, where the young folks gathered for a trial of skill, and garnished the victory with songs and agile reels, and with the fashionable courtship—danced down unaltered from those times; and they may seem strange in these days of the belle and the beau with their

clothes on, the peculiar abominations of the modern waltz and polka being unknown to them.

They had speaking schools, too, where plays and dialogues, from the good old National Preceptor, were spoken and acted as "nat'ral as life."

In all these scenes had aunt Ruth been conspicuous. She was the best singer, the best dancer, the most expert quilter, and, as if in defiance of fate, the ears of corn that she husked were sure to be red, thus betokening marriage.

When grandma Clare became a wife, aunt Ruth went with a friend to establish herself as a dress-maker in the city of Boston. At first she experienced many trials; unexpected difficulties were constantly thwarting her plans, and the death of her friend left her nearly companionless. But she was not of a temperament to be easily disheartened; and perseverance in her case soon gave a more promising aspect to her affairs, and she found herself at the head of a prosperous business and the favorite one among a large circle of valuable acquaintances. Boston had become her home, and although it was now many years since, having secured a competence, she had given up the cares of business; she had ceased to speak of returning to find a permanent abode among her kindred.

Aunt Ruth was a pattern old maid, having been all her life wholly and heartily resigned to a state of single blessedness. It was her settled opinion that the husband designed for her by Providence had unfortunately died in infancy. "She had never," she said, "had but one offer of marriage, and that was from a poor, spiritless fellow who had been rejected by almost every lady of her acquaintance."

During her residence in Boston she had only visited Rosedale a few times. At first business prevented; and then it was her constant undertaking in those days to take a journey of one hundred and sixty miles. The modern inventions of railroads and space were not in operation. The old-fashioned breaking down of the stage was the only mode of traveling among the enjoyments of life,

especially as the breaking down or turning over usually occurred in by and unfrequented ways far from the habitations of men. There was very little, if any, pleasure in the roll of a vessel at sea. But now that railroads and regular lines of steamboats were established, aunt Ruth was not slow to discover their peculiar advantages, and decided in her own mind on an annual visit to her friends at Rose-dale.

She won the hearts of the young people at once. The tones of her voice were so cheerful and motherly, her smile was so winning and benignant, that she seemed like a presence of gladness in their midst. Like all warm and genial natures she was a little garrulous, but never tiresome. Her quiet humor and quaint originality prevented that. She had kept her eyes open in her journey through life, and had not only been an attentive observer, but had pickled down for common use a fund of anecdotes.

But the portrait of aunt Ruth is not yet drawn ; the sweet charm that kept her so fresh and joyous has not been mentioned. She was a humble, devout Christian, a meek follower of the Savior of sinners ; not bigoted and morose in her religious feelings and views, chilling and repelling those who would fain approach the Cross of Christ, but affectionately desirous that all mankind should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. She had no fellowship with professors of "sour godliness ;" she never joined them in their endeavors to drape with somber clouds what God has made bright and beautiful. She grieved over the impression thus made upon the irreligious mind, that religion was only designed to rob us of our peace, or to destroy our innocent enjoyment of the bounties of the Creator.

For over thirty years she had been a member of the Church, and she had come to be regarded as a fixture in the class-room and vestry, and whoever occupied the desk of the church on the holy Sabbath was sure of one attentive auditor. She was truly a mother in Israel. Old Christians sought her society, and from her warm faith in God often

borrowed a ray of light as they took sweet counsel together, or walked to the house of God in company. The young disciples, laboring under the fierce trials and temptations incident to early Christian experience, came to her with their sorrows and fears, sure of her ever-ready sympathy and prayers. Earnest inquirers after truth, who felt that sin was a burden, and that without a Savior they were unfit to stand in the presence of a righteous and holy Judge, who trembled in the certain prospect of an endless existence, were often seen kneeling by aunt Ruth at the altar of prayer, crying, "God be merciful to us sinners!"

Such was aunt Ruth; happy and cheerful, rejoicing in her own assurance of the loving favor of God, and delighting to minister to the happiness of others.

Let us look at her once more as she sits by the tea-table. She is laughing heartily at Gerald's account of the afternoon's adventure at the post-office, and now, for the first time, her attention is directed to the shy little girl who is so quietly waiting on the old farmer.

"Why, brother," she exclaims, "who is this little girl? Not another grandchild?"

"It's Lila, our singing-bird. She has a wand and numberless enchantments, and creates sunshine in cloudy weather."

Lila blushed deeply at this curious reply, but encouraged by aunt Ruth's interest in her, she came to her side, and, in her unaffected regard for the kindly old lady, kissed her hand. There was a graceful humility in her manner as she did so that completely captivated aunt Ruth, who whispered, as she kissed her affectionately in return,

"We shall be friends, I'm sure of it."

CHAPTER XII.

“A wide, wild storm, even Nature’s self confounding,
Withering her giant sons with strange, uncouth surprise.”

THE evening was warm and sultry. The air had been close all day, and was almost stifling now that the afternoon breeze had died away. Not a leaf stirred on the trees, except on a slender aspen at the corner of the house, which, independent of the winds, rustled constantly on its own account. Dark masses of clouds lay heavily in the north, working gradually toward the east; not so distant but that the vivid lightnings were plainly observable, and the deep roll of the thunder almost terrific in its repeated echoes.

The arm-chairs of the old folks were in their accustomed places on either side of the front door, the young people occupying, as usual, the bench beneath the trees. There was quite a debate as to the most eligible place for aunt Ruth, which was finally decided by Gerald, who brought a great chair, that had been bereaved of its rockers, from the garret, and the cushions from the lounge in the sitting-room, and arranged them carefully beside the broad door-stone.

Aunt Ruth good-humoredly laughed at these great preparations, but was soon fain to acknowledge that they were not unwelcome after the fatigues of her journey.

Although the sunset had yet hardly faded into the twilight, there were here and there bright stars studding the blue sky above, and sparkling on the edges of the black, ponderous clouds that shrouded the east. An indescribable sensation of rest and quietude stole over the weary traveler as she leaned back in her chair, and in the silence which followed, listened, with the rest, to the monotonous note of

a solitary whippowil which had alighted on a fragment of rock near them.

"Lila, my child," said aunt Ruth, "will you sing to us now?"

"The song your mother liked," whispered Gerald.

The clear, rich tones of the child, a little tremulous at first, fell softly on the still air, and the sacred words she sang seemed more impressive than ever after aunt Ruth's loving lesson of charity. And there was unwonted pathos in grandpa Clare's evening petitions at the family altar, for her gentle appeal had touched his heart.

Friday was ushered in by a tremendous thunder-storm. The rain came down as if all the windows of heaven were open; the dazzling lightning flashed incessantly, and the thunder, reverberating through the valley, shook the old house to its foundation. For two hours the scene was absolutely terrific.

The family left their beds and gathered together in the wide sitting-room. Nellie lay on the lounge, her face buried among the pillows. Aunt Ruth was the only person who remained calm. Every other face was perfectly colorless; even the old man's lip, which, for years, had never blanched at danger, was of an ashen hue, for the tempest was very fearful.

There were a few moments of silence; not the quiet, refreshing stillness that usually accompanies the morning or evening twilight, but a hush as if the earth were horror-stricken at the prospect of some impending evil. Then came the wild tornado in its reckless fury, sweeping desolation and ruin along its path. Many a pleasant home in the pretty village was laid waste, and the affrighted inmates ran about the streets as if distracted. It passed harmlessly by the farm-house at Rosedale, but it made fearful havoc of the lofty trees that skirted the mountains.

There was another lull presently, deathlike and unbroken as the first. The suppressed breathing of the affrighted company alone told of the dread that had taken possession

of every mind. Suddenly a glare of light, blinding every eye, filled the whole house. It was accompanied—not followed—by a burst of thunder directly overhead, and one of the mighty trees that for so many years had stood like a guardian angel before the door fell heavily to the ground.

“O, John! O, Ruth!” exclaimed grandma Clare, rising and running about the room like one distracted with terror, “what shall we do? O, where shall we go?”

Aunt Ruth did not reply, for at that moment Gerald, who was on his knees by the lounge, with his arms around his sister, directed her attention to Lila, who, pale as death itself, stood as if paralyzed in the middle of the room. She did not faint or fall; her hands were raised beseechingly, and her lips parted as if to utter the prayer for mercy that her eyes were so plainly speaking, but she had no power to speak or to move. She was stunned by the sudden shock. Aunt Ruth spoke to her several times, but she did not answer; she entreated her to sit down, but she paid no attention. Except an occasional aguish shiver as the lightning gleamed in her face, she gave no signs of animation.

“It is the lightning! She is killed!” cried grandma. “O sister Ruth, what will become of us?” and the old lady, usually so stout-hearted and fearless, fell on her knees and clung tightly to her sister’s dress for protection.

“She is n’t dead, Mary; she is only frightened. Do not be so alarmed. Can you not trust in God? He is our Father, dear Mary, and the lightnings are in his hand. Get up! I can do nothing for her while you cling to me so. Gerald, leave Nellie for a moment and shut those blinds. Now bring me a glass of water. And, Mary, fetch some thick blankets to wrap around her. See how she shivers!”

It was with great difficulty that aunt Ruth made Lila swallow some water. She then folded the blankets around her, and, taking her in her arms, sat down and soothed and rocked her as if she had been an infant. Fright had taken complete possession of every faculty, and yet the lightning

seemed to possess a strange fascination, for she moved and turned uneasily around when her eyes were shaded from it. But aunt Ruth resolutely covered her face, and she soon lay quietly in her arms, breathing more and more naturally.

Still the storm did not abate its fury. The neighboring hills looked as if sheeted in silver as the torrent poured down, and the timid cattle in the yard bellowed fearfully in their terror.

Aunt Ruth's voice rose clear and cheerfully above the noise of the tempest as she sung,

“‘I will not fear, though armed throngs
Surround my steps in all their wrath;
Salvation to the Lord belongs,
His presence guards his people's path.’”

Beautiful words of comfort! Thrice beautiful in their soothing effect! Grandma Clare hushed her lamentations and sat quietly down by the side of her husband and listened eagerly. The hopeful piety expressed in the verse inspired their hearts with fresh confidence in the sleepless guardianship of the Almighty. Lila sat up and smiled, and farmer Clare began to converse with cheerfulness. The tempest abated not its fury, the danger was as imminent as ever, the prospect as dreadful, but hope and tranquillity softened its horrors, for they trusted in God.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” At last it became less vivid and frequent, and although the rain still threatened a second deluge the thunder soon ceased altogether. The great danger was past; all had been preserved from harm, and they gathered with joyful hearts around the family altar to return thanks for their safety.

And now, while the farmer visited his frightened cattle, the preparations for breakfast went on nearly as merrily and quite as briskly as usual. Every thing fell into the old welcome routine, and an occasional light laugh sounded like music in the old kitchen.

Lila was quite recovered, and laughingly insisted that

Gerald should not, even for once and if it rained twice as hard, milk her favorite heifer, Rosa. Gerald thought he should try, and told her, jokingly, that she need not look so disappointed, for Zeno would not think of making his usual morning visit in such a rain.

"O, it's such a pity!" exclaimed Lila; "I depended on seeing him this morning. He'll be so disappointed!"

Her manner was so earnest that it vexed him. For some reason, hardly known to himself, he began to be troubled whenever Zeno was mentioned. There was a mystery about the boy's morning visits to Lila that he could not penetrate. They had been constantly continued for several years, and the little girl often accompanied him half through the lane when he returned home. He would not stoop to gratify his curiosity by listening, and Lila, whenever he questioned her, had jokes and evasions innumerable. Whatever the secret was he saw that his grandfather understood and approved it, and this only made his own ignorance of it more tantalizing.

"Any one would think, Lila," he said, "that you really liked the great, awkward, lumbering fellow."

"Well, I do like him, and any body may think so who chooses. He is n't half as dull as he seems. He is as bright naturally as"—

"As I am, I suppose you mean," said Gerald, seeing that she hesitated. "Thank you for the compliment."

"As bright," pursued Lila, "as we are. Only think how he has been treated. He has to bow down and worship his ugly brother, and never gets a pleasant word from one of the family. I'd run away and never come back if I were he."

Gerald felt a little ashamed of his cross feelings; his better nature began to pity the poor, slighted boy. Still, he did not like Lila's interest in him, and the old man's constant jests about it were so many aggravations of his discontent.

"If he is n't treated well at home," he answered, "it is no

reason why he should be such a special favorite with you. Every morning he comes skulking around the corner, as if he had been stealing sheep. He never comes near the house to see the rest of us, and if I happen to come near when you are talking so fast together he is just as dumb and silent as a fish."

"He knows you do n't like him. He can see that in your looks."

"I do n't dislike him, Lila."

"No. But you think he's half a fool because he is bashful. Do you suppose he can't see that you do n't think much of him, or feel any interest in him?"

"Why should I? He's nothing to me. I do n't know why you should think so much of him. I suppose we could both treat him well without associating with him," and Gerald tossed his head a little proudly. Lila understood very well his unspoken sense of superiority.

"I forgot, Gerald," she said, innocently, "that we are stylish folks."

Gerald colored.

"And poor Zeno never knew it," she added. "He is dull, you know, and has never mistrusted it. He must be told. He must be spoken to directly. He must know his place when such great folks are by."

"I never knew you so provoking, Lila." He was thoroughly vexed. "Who has said a word about feeling above the red-headed dunce? I declare, if you and he were a few years older grandpa might with reason joke you on his frequent visits."

"Well," returned Lila, "I suppose we shall both get older, if we live."

"And he'll come sneaking across the lot just the same then, I presume?"

"I can't say; it is likely enough. I am sure I shall be glad to see him, if he does."

"You will probably be then, as you are now, the only associate he has."

"And will like him all the better, and be more attentive to him, if it be so."

"No doubt of it. He's a pretty mate for you, though, the awkward booby!"

"And I so handsome, Gerald."

"Nonsense!"

Gerald laughed in spite of his desire to frown.

"I'm sorry, sister, for teasing you so. Don't let us quarrel, at any rate. See! Nellie is wondering with all her might at our strange looks and actions. Let us kiss and be friends again."

"There! He's coming!" exclaimed Lila, pushing him aside in her eagerness to look out. "If he don't mind the rain, I sha'n't. Let me have the pail! I don't believe that Rosa would let you milk her."

She was gone in a moment. Gerald watched Zeno's approach with any thing but an inviting look. The poor boy, wrapped in his shaggy coat, and carrying a broken umbrella, looked less prepossessing than usual.

"It's the strangest thing in the world!" muttered Gerald. "I can't understand it at all. Heigho! I'll go and help grandpa."

He felt quite cross when he saw Lila again, fresh and smiling, at the breakfast-table. His face cleared a little when his grandma remarked that if the rain continued he would have an opportunity to study.

"And to-day Mr. Lewis is coming," said Lila.

"Did you invite Zeno to come over and see the goods unpacked?" inquired the farmer. "I saw there was quite a bit of privacy this morning. Eh, Lila?"

"You must guess, grandpa."

"I don't think cousin Allan will come," said Gerald; "the rain will prevent."

"No, it won't. It is going to clear up. O, Gerald!" said the child, earnestly, "there are birds' nests strewed all over the ground with the fallen tree. Where did the poor birds go when their pretty home was torn in pieces?"

They've sung so sweetly all the Summer, and now they're turned out of doors. Poor things!"

"It is not so bad as if it had happened earlier. The young birds are grown. They can fly nicely."

"Yes, I know that, but where are they?"

"O, they're snug in the woods somewhere. Perhaps the birds in the other trees made room for them. They're safe enough."

"Don't you know, my dear," said aunt Ruth, "that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without the knowledge of our Heavenly Father?"

"Yes, aunt. I forgot it, though."

"You may be sure that God took care of the birds this morning; and we, Gerald, have especial reason to be grateful that our singing-bird—as grandpa calls her—was spared. Look, Lila, how the blue sky is peeping in spots through the broken clouds! The day will be beautiful, and the pure air very refreshing. I think that cousin Allan will come, if he promised; but who is cousin Allan?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Eftsoons they heard a most melodious sound
Of all that might delight a dainty ear."

COUSIN ALLAN came. It was just two o'clock when his horse stopped before the door, and his kind voice was heard replying to the welcomes of the young people.

Nellie was the first to meet him, smiling and gesticulating, holding up first her mother's miniature, and then with her speaking fingers rapidly expressing her gratitude and pleasure. All this even before he had alighted. Her silent language was not quite intelligible to him, although eked out with an abundance of expressive looks, so she ran into the house for her slate and pencil, while Mr. Lewis was presented to aunt Ruth. They all followed Nellie into the house. She was ready with the questions written that she had failed to make him understand.

"Where did you find it? How can I ever pay you, cousin Allan? What can I do for you? Should you like a watch-case and some embroidered slippers?"

"One glance at your happy face, dear Nellie," he wrote in reply, "more than pays for all. I found the miniature at the shop where your poor papa sold it. The jeweler said he had kept it so long, because that in several similar instances relatives or friends had sought afterward to regain likenesses thus wantonly parted with, and had been inconsolable when they learned that they were lost forever. The extreme beauty of this, he confessed, had been one reason why he had preserved it. It was a pleasure to contemplate features so perfect, and his acquaintances had often rallied him on account of his devotion to a picture. He was show-

ing it to some friends when I entered the shop, and I recognized it immediately. About the slippers and watch-case; I think they would be useful, but I think, too, that Nellie owes cousin Allan a kiss for the pains he has taken. Don't you think so?"

Nellie, timid Nellie, usually so retiring in her manners, had no sooner read these words than she astonished the company by throwing her arms around Mr. Lewis's neck and kissing him repeatedly. Aunt Ruth had not yet heard the sad, early history of the orphans, and so Nellie's sudden action was more mysterious to her than to the rest. She was favorably impressed with Allan's appearance. The winning gentleness of his manner to the children was very attractive, and she liked particularly his thoughtful consideration for Nellie's embarrassment, who, confused at having attracted so much notice, now hid her blushes on his shoulder.

"I came on business, I believe," he said, looking round the room. "Lila, singing-bird, witch, where are you? I came from L. this morning on purpose to see you. I want to hear that song that you had n't time"—

"O don't, if you please, sir!" exclaimed Lila, starting and glancing hurriedly around.

"No; don't be alarmed. I almost forgot, though. Now, tell me. Haven't you been guessing and wondering till you are tired over the contents of the box? You can't imagine what I have sent. What do you think, Lila, would be a suitable present for a singing-bird?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Wings, sir."

"Really, what an idea! Father Clare, I must get you or Gerald to help unpack the box. We will take it into the parlor."

"Into the parlor!" exclaimed grandma.

"Yes, my good lady, unless you will vacate the hall while we are operating. Now I think of it, the hall will be best, for there will be some littering of straw and shav-

ings ; but Lila's present is to occupy the parlor, and so you will say when you see it."

"I can't imagine," said the old lady, "what on earth it can be!"

"Very likely. None of the women and girls are to know till every thing is in order to exhibit it to advantage. Now, Gerald, bring in a box of tools that is in the bottom of the carriage, while I turn out the ladies. It will be some time before you will be wanted, Lila, so do n't get impatient."

It was hardly an hour, but it seemed three to Lila, when the doors were thrown open and Gerald came out to invite the presence of the ladies. As they entered Mr. Lewis, without turning around to speak to them, commenced playing on a beautiful melodeon. This was Lila's present. The case was rosewood, finely polished, and making in itself quite an ornament to the plain room. It had folding scroll legs handsomely finished in the form of a harp. The pedals were steel, highly polished. The tones, of course, were fine, for it had been selected by Mr. Lewis himself, whose musical taste was indisputable. It possessed a range of power from the most delicate softness to the full volume of tone that is often necessary to express sacred melodies.

Lila stood as if fascinated while Allan played and sung piece after piece by way of displaying its merits. She had never heard any thing of the kind before, and the beautiful instrument seemed to her to be replete with a distinct life of its own. She stood with her lips slightly parted, and her small hands tightly clasped together, fearing lest the lightest movement on her part should break the spell and silence the melody. Mr. Lewis watched with delight its effect on her.

"It is precisely as I expected—as I hoped. Fairy," he said, "it makes you quite beautiful. It is a new sort of enchantment for you—a potent wand. How do you like it? There, there, don't thank me. Your eyes have done that already."

"O, sir," she said earnestly, her face still radiant with

delight, "I shall be so happy, so grateful always. Indeed, sir, I ought to thank you, but I do n't know how to tell you all the joy and gratitude I feel. It is such a beautiful gift that I can hardly believe it is mine. It seems so strange that you should have thought of me, sir."

"Stranger things often happen, my dear child. But there is still a grave question to settle. Do you think you can learn to play—to make it speak as I do?"

"As you do? O no, sir! but I'm sure I shall get to understand it somehow."

"I do not doubt it. I presume you would without the least instruction, but I want you to learn as soon as possible, and I have engaged a teacher for you and brought out now the necessary music."

"A teacher to come here?" asked Lila.

"No, you are to go to her. I do n't mean that she is to leave you, Mr. Clare," he added, seeing the old man shake his head. "Of course, I knew it would never do to think of that. Otherwise, I'd make such a singer and player of her as the United States never produced. A young friend of mine, Isabel Lee is her name, has come to spend a few months, perhaps a longer time, in your village. She is in delicate health, and her physician has ordered country air and exercise on horseback for her. This young lady has had the best teachers that could be obtained, and is an accomplished musician. She has brought her piano out, and Lila will take lessons on that. The bellows of the melodeon she must learn to manage for herself, only being careful to preserve an erect posture, and to blow without any apparent effort. Miss Lee is staying at Squire Thorpe's. She is his niece. I have quite interested her in her pupil, and, Lila, you will not feel in the least timid after you have seen her. You are to go Tuesdays and Fridays, in the morning at ten o'clock."

"But is there no return I can make to you for all this?"

"If you knew. Lila," he returned, smoothing her hair caressingly, as she stood anxiously regarding him—"if you

knew the pride and pleasure I shall take in your progress, you would never again ask a question like that. Do n't think of obligation unless you enjoy, like some others, the idea of being miserable. I am twice repaid by the pleasure you manifest."

Farmer Clare sat uneasily by, saying nothing at first, only fidgeting in his chair in a most ominous manner. But here was an opportunity to assert his favorite notion, and he proceeded, accordingly, with some pomposity, to give his opinion. He really wished, and had said so at least fifty times, that Mr. Lewis would not heap so many favors upon the young folks. It was no way to inculcate a spirit of independence. He felt ashamed to see how willing, how thankful even they were to incur such obligations. It told of degenerate blood somewhere. He really must, for the future, insist on their working their own way, and overcoming for themselves any obstacles that might present themselves. He appealed to aunt Ruth to sustain him in these views.

"First let me tell Miss Russell," said Allan, "that these are the orphan children of my cousin, and that their mother, poor Lucy, was my adopted sister. She will see that they have a claim upon me."

"To be sure," said aunt Ruth, nodding her head approvingly.

"And you think it right, do you, Ruth," asked the old man, almost indignantly, "for them to receive obligation after obligation from him? to be, in short, indebted to him for education, and clothing, and even for their amusements?"

"I see no harm in it, John," she returned, "if he is able, and you are not, to meet the necessary expenses. Think of the advantages of which your notions of independence would deprive them. They won't feel very grateful in after life for the lost opportunities of their youth."

"A pretty advocate I've secured!" said farmer Clare; "are you in league with him in this matter? But what claim can Lewis make out to pet? Eh, sister Ruth?"

"What claim can you make out yourself? Her sweet ways and affectionate disposition give her a claim upon all of us, I think. I'm as happy as she is that her extraordinary genius for music is to receive some attention. Now, brother John, this independence for which you contend so stoutly is only a big humbug. It will never lead us to assist and comfort our neighbors. It would be unworthy of you to offer favors to others if you are above receiving them yourself. Give it up, John. Call it by its proper name, selfish pride, and let it go to the winds."

"It's no use to talk. I see you are all combined together and will have matters your own way. But that don't alter my opinion in the least. I only—like a true republican—yield to the majority."

So saying he walked slowly out of the room to attend to his usual occupations.

"Lila," said Mr. Lewis, "let me give you a short lesson before I go. You can become acquainted with the gamut and key-board before Tuesday, and it will help Miss Lee in her instructions. See, they're connected on this page. Each letter of the gamut has its corresponding key. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, get thoroughly acquainted with the position of every letter on the staff, and on the instrument, and there is quite a step gained. Now, Gerald, just give me a peep at the 'studio,' and I'm off. I promised to be back to dine at L."

He was greatly pleased with the arrangement of the books, and with Gerald's enthusiasm. He noticed that every volume had been carefully covered.

"Lila and Nellie did that," said Gerald, in reply to his inquiring look.

"All you can do at present, my dear boy, is to persevere in the old way. Study when you can, but not when you are tired. You will gain nothing by overexertion. The way will open before you yet. You are sure of success if

you do not suffer yourself to become disheartened. Good-by, my boy," and hastily running down stairs, and stopping just a moment to say good-day at the parlor door, he sprang into his carriage and drove away—happy in his ability to make others so, and followed by blessings and kind wishes.

In the afternoon Gerald and his grandfather rode over to the village to ascertain the amount of damage wrought by the storm. There were sad marks of its fury in all directions. The unroofed dwellings presented a melancholy aspect. Families who but yesterday were comfortably sheltered, were now glad to obtain a lodging in the poorest outhouses.

Some houses had escaped with the loss of the window glass, and the unhinging of the doors, while the contents were thoroughly drenched by the rain. Many houses less injured still, were completely surrounded with broken palings and fallen shrubbery.

One poor woman, the mother of mischievous Mat Marrooney, or Irish Mat as he was more commonly called, sat crying in the door of her hovel. The wind had apparently scorned to trouble her humble abode, but the lightning had killed her cow, which, as Mat said, was "shure all the same as one of the family."

A yoke of stout oxen, belonging to farmer Bradford, were killed in the same manner, and Squire Thorpe was especially lamenting the loss of a fine saddle-horse, which had been crushed by some falling timbers. It was a beautiful bay colt, which had been purchased expressly for the use of his invalid niece.

There was devastation and ruin on every hand. There were very few who did not acknowledge the signal providence by which human life had been preserved; few, even among the most thoughtless, refused to think reverently of the Great Being whose sleepless love and care had been their sole protection and shield amid the late terrors. But the impression, like all others produced by fear, was too eva-

nescent to produce permanent effects. The good resolutions formed were soon forgotten, and the gay young people, and the more hardened elderly sinners, did not any oftener than before remember their Creator. Emboldened by their preservation, they grew more fearless in sin, and in a few hours many spoke jestingly of the "lucky chance"—so they called it—by which they escaped.

A subscription for the relief of the greatest sufferers was already on foot. All were busily at work repairing where it seemed advisable, or removing the ruins of their late homes to make room for rebuilding. Most were working heartily, even cheerfully.

It is not in the nature of a genuine Yankee to sit down hopelessly and brood over his troubles. He is hardly knocked down by a sudden freak of fortune before he is "up and at it again!" Settled despondency has no place in his ardent character. If he can not in every instance manufacture clocks or grow wooden nutmegs, he can always do something that answers just as well. There is n't a trade that he is n't up to. He can turn his hand to all that his ancestors knew, and to about all that they did n't know, and he is perpetually striking out in new directions.

It makes solid, phlegmatic John Bull, and even mercurial Patrick, quite dizzy to think of his multifarious plans, every one of which is perfectly feasible. The records of the Patent-Office attest his unlimited ingenuity.

Here, amid the dismal vestiges of the tempest, Yankee enterprise was already planning that the glory of the latter village should far exceed the former. Great and numberless improvements were suggested, and architectural models were compared and commented on by those who had never owned a stick of timber in their lives. Each, in his own way, demonstrated that it is no part of a Yankee's policy to build old houses.

The wind, as if in accordance with the wishes of many, had removed one of the principal obstacles in the way of a long-desired branch railroad. It was a large store, that had

been considered by its owner immovable by any agency, but it was now wholly prostrated and brought to naught. There was a far more eligible site in readiness on his own land, close by his residence, in the center of the village, and he decided on laying there the foundation of a new store, to be larger and superior altogether to the old one. At first he obstinately refused to give up the old spot, but on being offered thrice its value in ready money, he made up his mind that it would be wicked to resist longer "the workings of Providence." So now the dapper, little merchant, whose gaudy sign had attracted his pretty young customers with its idle flaunting, might look out.

In the public meeting held at twelve o'clock on the village green, to devise means to meet the present afflictive emergencies of the people, it was in due form unanimously resolved—as if directly calculated for such exigencies—that a branch railroad, connecting this village of Gothard with the railroad leading to the city from —, shall be laid out as soon as practicable.

"Which means, right away, of course!" shouted a genuine Jonathan.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I said, I will seek out sorrow and minister the balm of pity."

LILA found her Saturday occupations much less pleasant than usual. In the excitement of possessing a new source of enjoyment every thing unconnected with it was drudgery. It was well for her that aunt Ruth was there, and that the kind old lady knew how to excuse her fits of absence. She came often to rectify her blunders, or to remind her in a whisper of sundry household avocations that had entirely slipped from her memory. But for her the beautiful melodeon had been already anathematized, and even in spite of all the sly chores performed by her to screen its mistress's delinquencies, long before night grandmother Clare was doubtful of the utility of musical instruments in a hard-working farmer's family. There was no fear, however, that she would believe in it fully as soon as the work was properly completed.

Saturday is a busy day all the civilized world over. A thousand odds and ends that have contrived to keep out of sight during the week then invariably turn up to the light and demand attention. The needful preparation for the rest of the Sabbath occasions much extra labor; and when, as at Rosedale, all work must cease with the going down of the sun, it is not strange that little leisure is secured during the day. With the Saturday evening always came the Bible lesson and the Shorter Catechism for the young people, and early bedtime for all.

The chorister of the village church called this evening to invite Lila to become a member of the choir. The child was frightened at the bare idea. She could never sing well with others, she said; at school she had been allowed to

sing by herself in any time she fancied, and she was sure she could not sing a note in public. Besides, there were no young singers in the choir. It was composed of ancient vocalists, to whom a singer just entered upon her teens must, of course, appear an absurdity. And the favorite fugue tunes that were every Sabbath performed with such force and rapidity, would never become so familiar, she was sure, as to enable her to sing them without blundering. She would like to oblige the chorister, but she had no knowledge of music as a science and must be excused.

"Why, that makes no sort of difference as I can see," said the chorister. "Nobody will know whether you understand the rules or not. As to your youth, that's no objection. I heard young Frank Thorpe say last Sunday—he is at his uncle's spending the college vacation, you know—that 'the Gothard choir had completely run to seed.'"

Lila knew that most of the ancient landmarks under his supervision were quite as innocent of musical knowledge as herself. Excepting two bass singers, one tenor, and a shrill soprano, who was no less a personage than Mrs. Bradford, the entire orchestra, instruments and all, went by rote. This fact would only increase the difficulty of singing with them, "If, indeed," she whispered to Gerald, "it were possible to sing at all in a choir where Mrs. Bradford was chief howler."

So she again declined accepting the chorister's kind invitation.

"Come at least to the rehearsal to-morrow morning. It will be in the church at nine. You will learn the tunes by meeting with us a few times, and I know you will be a very desirable addition to our choir. Say that you will come."

But Lila would not promise.

Sunday morning came bright and cloudless. It was always a long, tiresome morning to Gerald, for he was not allowed to study, or to ramble in the woods, or to read any of his favorite books. Among the volumes belonging to his grandfather—which were not interdicted—there were

very few that interested him. The family rose and breakfasted as early as on the busiest mornings of the week, for the old farmer was very strict in his notions of the sanctity of the day, and held it as an article of faith, that the whole of it, instead of a short afternoon, had been blessed and hallowed when it was first set apart by the Almighty.

So it often happened that, after the business of the Sabbath toilet was over, Gerald was very much perplexed to know how to dispose of himself till meeting-time.

On this particular morning he bethought himself of the chorister's invitation to Lila, and offered to accompany her to the rehearsal.

"We will go in below, Lila, so that no one will see you. It will be capital to hear them."

"Will grandpa let us?"

"To be sure. Do n't he think that the twang of those psalms that chase each other so is sacred? Come, tie on your hat, and do n't waken him. He's sound asleep, as any man of sense would be, over that prosy book."

For some time previous to their arrival at the church, they heard the whole machinery of the choir in active operation; the spasmodic shrieking of the abused fiddle and the regular explosions of a distracted bassoon being distinctly audible.

They entered the house without being observed, and seated themselves under the gallery, which was very high, nearly on a level with the huge sounding-board over the pulpit. Here they could hear every tone of the music, not even losing the syllable "um," with which the chorister prefaced all his directions and even his matchless solos. The good man had a way of humming preludes to every tune, and of interspersing among his instructions little snatches of the melody to be performed, or, as Gerald remarked, "to be capitally executed."

These little tastes of the "good things coming" were now as they had been for thirty years hummed to sundry cabalistic syllables—for so they seemed to the uninitiated—

"tum, tum, fa, sol, la, deedle, dee." These the treble singers always understood as expressing a hint for their direction. "Per, di, di, di," sung the chorister lightly, as he bent forward to give the tenor his cue, and "row, de, dow, de, dum," in sonorous guttural notes, brought the bass up to the proper pitch of voice and enthusiasm.

Now, the chorister was of as much consideration in the parish as the clergyman. The young folks thought with awe of the office he held, and many a sprightly miss, looking up from the square, high-fenced pews below, wondered if it were madness to aspire to a subordinate station under his administration, if, in the order of Providence, any of the present incumbents should vacate the premises.

He was a stout, bluff-looking man, about fifty years old, with a forehead broad but low, and remarkably-bright eyes, both of which were round and small, and one of which squinted. His gray hair, which in early life had been black and curly, still retained its crooked propensities, and intertwined and intertwisted itself like a giant forest creeper. His motions were startlingly abrupt, darting from right to left like a bird.

It was a sight when he beat time on a warm Sunday afternoon, when the last piece for the day—which was always selected by himself—was being executed. He would strike out in the most expert manner within an inch of the solitary tenor's nose, his left foot at the same time performing a similar service for the benefit of the lagging bass.

It was such an anthem, designed for the afternoon, that they were now rehearsing.

"Attention, all!" cried the chorister. "Mr. Rogers, strike up there—tum, tum, deedle; Patia, you sing that part—la, la, la; Mr. Burrell, you sing that part—per, di, di. All ready! Begin it! Um, fa, sol. Um, Ho-o-san-a"—

Here, the whole body of vocalists striking in, his voice was drowned in the united clamor. It must be confessed that by the time Divine service commenced, neither of *our* young friends was in a proper frame of mind to join in

its devotions. The morning seemed twice as long as usual, and the service of interminable length. The stout men who had gone barefooted and with the lightest possible clothing all the week, sat in the hot church arrayed in thick broad-cloths and heavy boots, and, as a consequence, nodding assent to every word the minister uttered.

How the preacher himself kept awake was a mystery, for he never raised his eyes from the paper before him, and made no gestures except occasionally thrusting out his hand in a straight direction over the front of the pulpit, unless, indeed, certain hitchings of the shoulders at the commencement of the sentences were intended for them.

He was not their own pastor, but a traveling agent on a mission of benevolence. His object was to obtain funds to establish schools among the unfortunate heathen west of New York State, and he drew a picture of their great destitution which had a moving effect upon one of his audience, who was a citizen of the region in question, and who declared as soon as meeting was over that the agent "lied confoundedly."

The Sabbath school was at noon, to accommodate those who resided at a distance. There was a great sparkling among blue eyes and black eyes when Mr. Harrington, the Superintendent, announced that it was proposed to have a Sabbath school picnic in a fine grove adjacent. To have it as pleasant and profitable as possible, a committee had been appointed to present a handsomely-bound Bible to the pupil who should then offer the best original essay. He urged all the older pupils to try, and to do their best. There would be ample time for all to attempt it during the fortnight which would intervene. The subject was left for their own selection. He hoped that the parents and friends of the pupils would also be present, and if there were a poor child in all the village who would be unable to appear suitably clothed, he hoped there were kind Samaritans enough among the ladies to provide all that was needful, and to see that nothing was wanting.

"Shall you try for the premium, Zeno?" asked Lila, as they met in the church porch.

"I try!" he rejoined, as if amazed at the thought.

"Yes. Why not?"

"Because it would be of no use. Every body thinks I am a dunce."

"Then it will be a good time to convince every body that you are not a dunce. I would try if it were only for that. I'm sure you need not fear. The paper that you brought over yesterday morning was, as the schoolmaster says, well written. You can do even better than that if you will believe it. I do n't think you would get the prize, Zeno, but I'm sure your piece would be noticed. We have n't got to read them ourselves, you know."

"I could n't write any thing fit to be read, Lila; I know I could n't."

"And I know you could. Say that you'll try. Come, now, won't you? Quick, for there's Gerald waiting to walk home with me."

"I'll try if it will please you, Lila, but it will be of no use. I can guess who will win the prize, though," said he, regarding her admiringly.

"I will get it if I can," she returned.

She expected that Gerald would rally her about her interview with Zeno, but he did not mention it. He looked grave, and she fancied angry at first, but the latter expression soon left his face, which became sad and thoughtful. They walked on silently till the carriages had all gone past, and then he seemed so absent and melancholy that she made no attempt to talk with him. Since their half-quarrel about Zeno he had been less free and social with her than formerly, although invariably kind and obliging. But the idea of his being seriously displeased with her had not occurred to her till now. He did not speak till they had turned down the lane toward home. Then he noticed her unusual silence, and that she frequently fell behind in walking, although he went very slowly.

"You are tired, Lila. I'm sorry that you attempted to walk home; it is too long a walk for you."

Surprised that she did not reply he turned inquiringly toward her.

"Lila! In tears, too!" His old cordial manner was restored in a moment. "My dear little sister! what has happened to distress you?"

She was sobbing now so that she could not speak. He soothed her affectionately, and making her sit down under the shade of a tree, untied her hat and sat down by her side. Although quite puzzled as to the cause of this sudden outburst of emotion, so unlike Lila, he waited till she was quite composed before he spoke again.

"Now, sister," he said gently, "tell me what it is. If it is a secret I will help you keep it."

"I was very foolish, that is all. Since the dreadful storm I cry for nothing, I believe. At any rate for mere trifles."

"Yes, but let me know the trifle that just now distressed you. It is not a mere nothing that could so agitate you. Why need you have so many secrets from me, Lila?" he inquired almost reproachfully.

"I was so sorry, Gerald, that I had offended you; that you were angry with me."

"*I* angry!" he repeated in a surprised tone; "and with *you*, Lila!"

"You must n't, Gerald, be displeased with me. I shall get wiser and better as I get older. At any rate I'll try. But if you should get to hate me, Gerald, I should die, for nobody understands me but you."

"Hate you, Lila! As if such a thing were possible! There is a great deal more danger that I shall worship you."

She looked up brightly and put her hand playfully on his lips.

"O, Gerald! You know you *were* angry with me."

"Well, dear, I will own that I was a little vexed. I am always vexed when I think of your unaccountable intimacy

with that poor simpleton, or, rather, of the privacy you maintain in reference to him. I have no right to be angry, but, indeed, Lila, I think you might trust me a little more."

"I do trust you, I'm sure. I've never had a secret of my own since I knew you, Gerald. You knew all about my foolish verses, and day-dreams too, years ago. I have trusted no one else as I have you. I've told you every thing."

"And about Zeno?"

"I'm afraid you'll laugh at me if I tell you about him. If you will promise not to ridicule me I'll tell you every thing."

"But I do n't want you to confide in me, because you are afraid that I shall be angry."

"No, not for that, but I really want you to know."

"Well, then, let us walk on toward home while you are talking, for the folks will think we have run away."

They went on hand in hand, as in their earlier childhood, and Gerald listened with surprise and admiration as she imparted, in her sweet, earnest manner, the secret of her interest in the homely, ungainly boy. She told him that just before he and Nellie came to live at Rosedale she had been sent one day on an errand to farmer Bradford's house, and had herself witnessed the usage he received—kicks from his passionate brother, cuffs without number from his unnatural mother, and hard words and abusive names from all; how that he was driven from the door like a dog, and how she found him, half an hour afterward, lying on his face in the green lane, longing to die, wishing that he had never been born, and crying that he must always be the fool they called him; how she pitied him, and going to him sat down by his side, and by kind words, and even by tears she could not repress, showing her sympathy; how she tried to encourage him, and what a smile lighted up his poor sunburnt face when she offered to teach him to read, unknown to his tormentors.

He had since learned to read and to write, displaying

a thirst for knowledge most encouraging, and as he grew older had become a proficient in several common English branches of study. And all this without going to school a single day, for his mother was fond of saying that "it was folly to school a dunce." Grandpa and-grandma knew all about it and had provided the necessary books.

"Poor Zeno!" said Lila in conclusion; "I can't tell you, Gerald, how hard he has tried. He has had to learn such little bits at a time, and to keep his books hidden lest his mother should find it out and oppose him. How she can help seeing the change and improvement in him is very strange to me, though I dare say he does not appear to good advantage at home, treated like a brute, as he always is. And, Gerald, he never says a word against her—not even to me."

"Does his father never speak kindly to him?"

"It is very seldom that he speaks to him at all, but Zeno thinks that he has a higher opinion of his natural abilities than his mother has. He does not ill-treat him, and never questions him about his coming here so often. I believe he is glad that his son has any means of enjoyment. His mother do n't care where he is, if he is only out of her sight."

"I wish I had known all this sooner. I should have treated him more kindly."

"He was much afraid, for a long time, that you would suspect. And, really, Gerald, I do n't know how you have managed to remain ignorant. You have passed by when I have been writing copies for him, and you must have seen the books we used."

"No, I was too proud to watch you."

"Well, you know all about it now. I have taught him all I know, Gerald, and in arithmetic he is far in advance of me. Still he comes, and he reads his compositions to me, and I still pretend to teach him, because it is such a pleasure to him to see a friend. O, Gerald, you might help him so much! You know so much more than I do, and he needs

now a teacher who is more advanced. If you would, Gerald."

"I will do all I can for him. I am quite ashamed of myself. You, so little and delicate, accomplishing so much that is useful, and that poor lad striving against such discouragements to obtain a respectable position in life, and I, like a great jackass, fretting because you were not wholly devoted to me! I am really ashamed of myself!"

He was so sure of this that he kept repeating over and over—as if no other language, now that new light had dawned upon him, could express his whole opinion—"Yes, I am really ashamed of myself!"

Nellie met them at the foot of the hill and hurried them in to tea. The fallen tree had given free ingress to the sunbeams which illuminated the table and robbed the whole room of its former prison-like aspect. A cheery, genial glow lighted up the bright pewter that adorned the dresser, and pleasant rays of light flickered on the broad stone hearth, as if coyly seeking to awaken the dying ember stifling among the ashes.

When the sun set and left a long line of radiance upon the hills, Lila stole out into the little flower garden, to enjoy, uninterrupted, the tranquil beauty of the hour. It was no trim parterre of rare and costly plants, but was filled with those sweeter, prettier blossoms that God has made to adorn the dwellings of the humble poor.

The delicate larkspur and the fox-glove, white and crimson petunias, violets and pinks in their fragrant varieties; sweet-pea and the graceful Summer convolvulus intertwining lovingly upon the same rude frame; noonsleeps, and marigolds, and bright double hollyhocks—all these were carefully nurtured, and the different colors so arranged as to produce a natural and pleasing effect.

There were tufts of ribbon-grass here and there, no pattern of which has ever yet been matched, though thousands of rosy children annually try their skill in attempting it; and all the little flower-beds were bordered with box, and

the white, and scarlet, and gold, and crimson cups of the modest portulacca.

Gerald had built a little rustic Summer-house at the foot of the garden, over which a luxuriant grape-vine hung its tempting purple clusters, half hiding with its dark-green leaves the gaudy trumpet woodbine that had been trained about the entrance. But Lila did not pause here; she wanted a more open view of the pleasant dell in its Sabbath loveliness.

A little further on was a favorite resort—a velvety mound shaded by a single tree. Here she sat down, and after a few moments took from the folds of her shawl a small embroidered portfolio—the gift of Nellie—and, opening it upon her lap, began to write rapidly. Let us go nearer and peep over her shoulder. We shall not else discover what it is that so changes the pale, plain face, and lights up the drooping eyes. She is writing of the Sabbath, the hallowed time that God has appointed for the weary to rest.

O, the glorious Sabbath eve!
When all the beautiful west
Is mottled with lilac and gold—
In purple and crimson is drest!

There's a calm in the murmurous air,
A lull in the sweet-scented gale—
A hush on the mountains so fair,
And silence adown the dale.

The bird sings sweet on the bough
That droops o'er the rude garden wall;
And the aspen whispereth low
As the deepening shadows fall.

While a softened quiet blends
With the hues of the landscape bright,
And its holiest influence lends
To the beautiful Sabbath night!

CHAPTER XV.

"Seeds of merciless disease
Lurk in all that we enjoy ;
Some, that waste us by degrees,
Some, that suddenly destroy."

LILA awoke on Tuesday morning with an indistinct sense of something pleasant connected with the day. But it was not till she had sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes more than once that she fully recalled the mighty fact that it was the day appointed for the first music lesson. She did n't fairly realize it then, and was obliged to go a number of times before breakfast and take a strong look at the melodeon, to convince herself that it was not a part of a delightful dream.

Yet, notwithstanding the absorbing interest inspired by the prospect of learning to play on it, she forced herself, before setting out, to plan the outline of an essay to be read at the picnic.

"I'll do my very best," said the child to herself. "I will try day and night if I am sick a month to pay for it; for if poor papa ever returns how pleased he will be if I win the prize!"

Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of the slender probability of ever seeing her kind parent again, but she brushed them gayly off and tripped down stairs singing as joyously as the birds up in the old trees.

It was a lovely morning. A silvery mist curtained the valley, but the blue light of Summer shone brightly on the hills, and sparkled in the very face of the merry little brook as she crossed the old wooden bridge. How musical was the sound of the gurgling eddies as they frolicked about the

smooth pebbles ! Lila thought there must be more music in the world than common. The wind murmured quite a connected harmony among the broad vine leaves and willows that fringed the stream, and the birds appeared to have given out notice for a general rehearsal.

She had nearly reached the end of the lane, and was timidly beginning to dread a little her first introduction to her teacher, when she was startled by a curious sound proceeding from behind a clump of alders by the side of the road. It was like the bark of a dog, but it had a muffled, stifled sound, as if the animal were choking. It was followed by a chuckling laugh, expressive of great enjoyment on the part of some one.

On approaching nearer she saw a large, handsome Newfoundland dog tied to a stake and almost strangling himself in his furious attempts to get free. Just out of his reach was a boy lying lazily upon the grass, and amusing himself with pricking the poor animal's sides with a sharp-pointed stick.

"For shame, Mat!" said Lila, coming up close to him before he saw her. "What are you doing to the poor dog?"

"An' shure it's punishing the baste I am, for his ould, ugly thrick of growling at me whin I coom ppaceably by of a mornin'. An' it's him that'll niver pretind again that it's the melons I want, or the paches, whin I cooms for a dhrink of fresh water. Och! it's fun, miss. Wait a bit gin I make him howl for ye. It's him that's got the swate music by heart. Wake up, wake up, ould fellow!"

"Stop! Stop!" exclaimed Lila. "You cruel boy! Aren't you ashamed to tease him so? How would you like to be tied up by the neck, and have some wicked boy like yourself to worry your life out with a big stick? I dare say, Mat, that you would have stolen both peaches and melons if he had not watched you."

He looked a little disconcerted as he got up and began to dig up the grass with his dirty toes.

"An' it were not staling, miss," he said, sulkily, "for

me own hands would have carried the best to his riverence the praste, who for that same would confiss me in a twinkling. Sorra a bit of silver have I for his riverence, and many is the sins gone from me intirely while waiting. Bad luck to the black baste!"

"Do you mean the priest?" asked Lila, smiling.

"An' it were not a sin I'd be after maning the praste as soon as the dog," replied Mat, giving a sudden poke to the dog.

"If the dog were loose you would not dare to abuse him. See what a fine, noble fellow he is! Let him alone, Mat. You shall not tease him," said Lila, putting her hand on his arm to stop him.

"You let *me* alone! that's the idea. And I'll fret him to death if I likes. O, then," said Mat, "and his sowl may be shut in purgatory forever and ever—the hiritic! So stand off!"

"In a minute. Let me just pat his head and smooth his hair. How soft and silky it is!" said Lila, admiringly, as she bent over the fine animal, and, unperceived by Mat, succeeded in untying the clumsy knot that confined him, so that a little exertion on his part would wholly release him.

"Now, Mat, I will give you this silver dime if you will stop teasing him till I am out of sight. I can not bear to hear the distressing noise he makes. Will you promise? 'Twill pay you for your going to confession, at least it ought to be sufficient."

"Where are you going to get out of sight?"

"To Squire Thorpe's; that great brown house with green blinds."

"Yes; I promise."

Lila hurried on and was just entering the gate in front of the house, when she heard a panting sound behind her as of some one out of breath, and presently the beautiful dog rushed by her, and, without ceremony, bolted into the open window.

"There, Isabel!" said a voice inside, "did n't I tell you that he was n't lost or killed? He's only been taking a morning excursion by himself to get a snuff of the fresh mountain air."

"I'm very glad that he is safe—more glad than you deserve, Nero, after the anxiety you have caused your mistress."

Lila could not see the speakers, but the voices were pleasant, and she lifted the knocker quite boldly. The door was opened by a young lady apparently about eighteen years of age, with a pale but lovely face, and kind, cordial manner. Her voice and whole appearance was so winning, that Lila was quite emboldened, and asked without embarrassment if Miss Lee were within.

"That is my name, I believe," returned the young lady, smiling; "and you are my new music scholar, Lila Wood, are you not?"

"Yes, ma'am, if you please."

"Well, I am glad you have come. I have quite wanted to see you since Mr. Lewis spoke of you. Come into the parlor. Do not be afraid, my dear"—she felt the child's hand tremble in hers—"you will see no one but me this morning; and I am to be your friend, your companion, Lila, if you will let me, and the dry instructions are to be as little formal as possible. Do you like my plan?"

"Yes, very much indeed."

Lila made wonderful progress—so it seemed to her gentle instructress—in a single morning. She remembered perfectly all of Miss Lee's directions, so that it was not once necessary to repeat them. Isabel was as much gratified as her pupil.

Wonderful progress was made, too, in their acquaintance with each other, and before many lessons had been given, there were loving, sisterly kisses at parting, and by her teacher's desire Lila soon adopted a less timid and deferential manner, and addressed her familiarly as Isabel. It was one of the rare cases of love at first sight.

Well might Gerald imagine that he had fresh cause for jealousy, as he listened in the evening to Lila's glowing praises of her new friend, and saw them, with dear, silent Nellie, on every pleasant afternoon, start off for a ramble among the hills. Sometimes aunt Ruth accompanied them—not often ; she was too old and stiff, she said, for such things now.

During these excursions Isabel's pony rested, if he were ever tired of his light burden, in farmer Clare's stable, but Nero was always one of the party. He had been rather shy of going abroad alone since his adventure with Mat, and received a little suspiciously any attentions proffered by a stranger. For Lila, however, he had a particular regard ; he always seemed to bear in mind her charitable interference in his behalf, and to understand that the manner of his deliverance was a secret between them. He cherished a settled antipathy toward Irish Mat, and had succeeded a number of times already in frightening the boy half out of his wits, for which he received a vast amount of petting and coaxing from the postmaster's wife. He had been early taught to fetch and carry, and sometimes came to Rosedale by himself with a message from his gentle mistress. Not often, however, for after the first few visits, scarcely a day passed without bringing the cheering sound of the pony's steps as he came with a free, rapid gallop down the long lane.

The lessons were usually given now on the melodeon, and then Isabel was fatigued and must rest before she could return home, and when she had rested and partaken of some tempting delicacy prepared with affectionate skill by the experienced hand of aunt Ruth, she was sure that a ramble in the woods would be just the thing for the long afternoon. No one objected to her plans, for the pleasing interest she excited was saddened by the fear, daily becoming stronger, that when the bright flowers drooped before the early frosts of Autumn, she too would leave forever the green haunts that she so dearly loved.

When Gerald became acquainted with her, and sat, as she

desired, by her couch at noon reading aloud, devoting his intervals of leisure, as they all did, to the uncomplaining invalid, she would often shake off the languor and apathy inseparable from her disease. On such occasions, her transient animation would deceive them all, and hope would whisper that the fragile blossom might yet be spared. Then the sudden pallor succeeding the hectic flush would reiterate the sad, sad truth that the blighting worm was already in the heart of the delicate flower.

No one was blind to this but Lila. She never once thought of what was so plain. The ethereal delicacy of her friend's complexion seemed to her perfectly in keeping with the sweet purity of her mind. The unnaturally-bright eyes and crimson cheeks were not unnoted, and sometimes a hurried recollection that her own mother became thus strangely beautiful before she was taken from her came back vividly to her memory, but she never once thought that Isabel could die. No, the cold Winter would surely brace up the languid frame and give strength and buoyancy to the failing feet.

Mrs. Thorpe was at first half disposed to quarrel with her niece's preference for the society at Rosedale, but she was too kind to interfere in any thing that really afforded her pleasure; so she contented herself with privately requesting grandma Clare to keep her all night when the evenings were chilly, and with assurances of ample remuneration for all the trouble she might occasion.

It was on one of these evenings, when Lila was busy helping grandma in the kitchen, and when Isabel seemed less fatigued than usual, that aunt Ruth, after adjusting the pillows of the invalid's couch and patting Nero's head a great many times, sat down, according to her wont, in the window seat, to read and meditate upon a portion of God's holy Word. Isabel lay still, quietly watching her.

There was a benign sweetness in the old lady's countenance that accorded well with the golden light that the setting sun threw around her. As she continued to read, its peaceful serenity became more marked and beautiful.

"Aunt Ruth!" said Isabel at length.

"Well, dear, what is it?" asked the old lady, rising to lay the Bible aside.

"No, do not put it away. Dear aunt Ruthy, how does the Bible make you so happy? Am I troublesome?" for she saw aunt Ruth hesitate.

"O no! I am glad that you asked. But, dear Isabel, does not God's Word give you comfort? Have you not yet experienced the peace found in believing its promises?"

"Not as you have, I am afraid. Come nearer, aunty. This troublesome cough prevents my exerting myself."

Aunt Ruth came and sat down on the couch, and gently raising the light form, pillowed her head upon her own broad bosom, and putting back the soft, damp hair from her forehead, kissed her tenderly.

"You are quite easy now, dear Isabel?"

"Perfectly; but I shall tire you."

"No, indeed. You are as light as a baby. Now let me hear what you wanted to say. I may not have wisdom to counsel you, but I am sure our kind Heavenly Father will not turn aside my prayers for you."

"O aunty, I have so longed to speak to you! I was afraid you would be annoyed if I came to you with my little personal experiences."

"Annoyed! Dear Isabel!"

"I often think, aunt Ruth, that I am a lamb of the Redeemer's flock; that I have learned rightly to follow Jesus, the Savior of sinners. I find such happiness at times in committing myself and all my interests into his hands. Still, there are times when my mind is not clear; when I seem to be groping by myself in the dark; when the Bible is a sealed book to me and I can not pray. Do you think, dear aunt, that the Savior deserts me at such times? Does he become weary of my slow progress and frequent haltings, and so leave me to myself?"

"'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' is his own word, my dear."

"True. How could I forget it? Still that promise belongs to his children, and I am not sure always that I have a right to say *our* Father. I doubt it often, and then I am so miserable. I want to feel every moment that I am a member of the household of faith. How shall I attain such constant serenity of mind as I desire—as you enjoy—aunt Ruth?"

"By trusting in Jesus, my child. There is no other way. Believe in his infinite love. It never changes. Your feelings may change often; your disease and the circumstances around you will exert an influence upon you; it can not be otherwise. But your feelings are not the standard by which you must try yourself."

"My mind is weak, dear aunt. I can not wholly control myself. I often find myself going astray before I suspect that any thing is wrong. My conscience often recalls sinful acts that appeared lovely and blameless when they were performed. I am often puzzled to know whether to condemn myself or not, my feelings and actions seem so contradictory, so inconsistent with each other."

"He knoweth your frame, dear Isabel, he remembereth that you are but dust. In the hour of darkness he is nearest, proving and trying you—fitting you for his kingdom. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear, for he is far more interested in your salvation than you can possibly be. Would he have died for you if he had not loved you with an everlasting love? Trust in him fully and he will not fail to deliver you. It is true that our best actions are imperfect in his sight, and the tempter comes, an accusing spirit, to remind us of this; but our Father, my dear child, sees the heart, and he judges us not by our actions alone, but by the motives and feelings which actuate us. And when all these would only condemn us, still we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous."

"How much you help me! I often fear that I am deceiving myself, that I have no well-grounded hope of eternal

life. This thought occasions me more sorrow than all else. It would be so dreadful, after confidently dreaming of heaven, to wake up in eternity lost, forever lost ! I am fast dying. Do not tremble, dear aunty, do not weep ; you know it surely as well as I. I would not, if I could, have it different. The world is very fair, very beautiful, but the rest for the weary is above. If I only knew that my name was written in the Book of Life, it would be sweet to go safely home to-night. How shall I know, aunt Ruth, that I am a child of God ?”

“ Let us see, dear Isabel, if thorough self-examination, using the tests of Scripture, will not help to establish you. Are you tired ?”

“ No, pray go on. Who is coming ?”

“ Only Nellie. She will not interrupt us. I am sure, my love, I need not ask, after what you have already said, if you have heartily repented of all your sins.”

“ I am afraid, aunty, that I do not feel such deep sorrow as I ought on account of them.”

“ Yet you are sure that you are sincerely desirous to shun sin, and to be, in every respect, conformed to God’s holy will ?”

“ Yes, indeed, I am sure of that.”

“ Well, let us see what the Bible has for your encouragement. It does n’t say to you ‘ Be miserable, oppressed, cast down, and despairing for a long season,’ but ‘ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return unto the Lord who will have mercy upon him, and to our God who will abundantly pardon.’ If your repentance, dear Isabel, leads you to abhor heartily and to forsake sin, you may with all confidence receive the promise given to the trembling and repentant jailer, ‘ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ ”

“ What is faith, aunty ? You smile, but you speak of it so readily, as if it were not such a mystery.”

“ Faith is trust. If I promise you something you trust

in my word, you believe what I say, you have confidence in my ability to perform what I have promised."

"Why, is that all?"

"Yes. How surprised you look! Only it is impossible to trust in a fellow-mortal so fully as in our Heavenly Parent. His promises are never broken, which can not be said of ours. He promises to save all who come unto him. His infinite power is a ground of our confidence that he will do so; and while we do not doubt his willingness to save us, we are also rejoicing in his ability to perform all that he has promised."

"I have felt so disappointed often, aunt, because my experience is so different from my preconceived ideas. I thought I must, of necessity, feel very unhappy a long time, and then, when all had become dark and hopeless, a sudden light, a sort of revelation from above was to shine upon me, and I was to enjoy from that moment perfect bliss."

"You are not singular, I believe, in indulging such views. But they have no foundation in Scripture. The prolonged misery that so many speak of is not a part of their religious experience, but the blind, obstinate struggles of a will that will not yield to Christ. When they finally submit to him they become happy, not before; and they might drag along with their gloom and remorse till the end of the world, and find no benefit from their repentance. It is Christ who gives salvation; through his sufferings, not our own, we obtain pardon; and surely there is nothing meritorious in our refusing for days and weeks to receive this grace at his hands, just to convince ourselves and ignorant professors of religion that our penitence is genuine. How much better," said aunt Ruth, "to come cheerfully to the Gospel feast and to accept joyfully the pearl of great price!"

"O, aunt Ruth! I should like to hear you preach, I think."

"Well, my dear," replied the old lady, laughing, "one would hardly expect that you would advocate female preach-

ing. But if I were to preach I should certainly proclaim that the Gospel is a messenger of glad tidings, of peace and good-will from God to man."

"I'm sure you would, dear aunt," said Isabel, after a pause. "Do you ever fear death?"

"Not often—never as those who reject the Savior must fear it. The mysterious separation of the soul and body, and the certainty that the event cometh alike to all, that we can by no means escape it, or tell when our time shall come, has often occurred to my mind with such force as to inspire a momentary dread, and I have wished for dying grace to live by."

"O, how often I wish so, too!" rejoined Isabel, earnestly.

"God gives grace just as we need it, my dear, and we may confidently rely upon his Word that his grace shall be sufficient for us. We need not fear the dark valley of death, for he will assuredly be with us there. Many a time, Isabel, has it been my privilege to stand by the bedside of a dying Christian—often by those who were young, doubting, and timid like yourself. And death, so much and so long dreaded, was but the golden gate that opened into the heavenly kingdom. I have felt like Bunyan, after such scenes, as if I had almost seen through its portals the glory of the celestial city."

"Dear aunt, how much happier I feel! I feel as though our Savior was very near us to-night. While you have been speaking I have found it so easy to believe in him. He is surely my Redeemer, and with him for my great Advocate, I shall not fear to stand before my Judge. My heart is so light; all its fears and anxious doubts are gone. Aunt Ruth, how shall I be kept from again indulging in unbelief? How shall I maintain this delightful frame of mind?"

"In the same way that you have obtained it, by simple faith. It is an easy way, a simple but happy way, and a way that is always practicable. But you are getting tired. I'm

afraid that we have both forgotten your delicate health, and your need of rest. You must be quiet the rest of the evening."

"I feel rested, and so much happier. Where is Lila?" she asked, turning to Gerald, who now entered the room.

"Working at her essay, giving it its final polish before it is read in public to-morrow."

"Have you read it?"

"Yes, but I must n't tell."

"Really! It is so near the time I think she might indulge us all with a hearing. Ask her, Gerald, to let you read it aloud to us, to try its effect. She won't refuse poor Isabel."

He hesitated.

"She would not refuse you any thing, Miss Lee, but she is so sensitive about her compositions, and this one in particular, that I do not like to ask her. I think the essay is beautiful."

"Do n't you think, Gerald," asked aunt Ruth, "that if we heard it and admired it she would listen to it herself to-morrow with less diffidence? I saw this morning that she had become quite nervous about it. She seemed to think a great deal depended on her winning the prize."

"She will be sure to get it," said Gerald warmly; "there isn't one in the place, and not many any where, who can write as she does. I couldn't to save my life."

"Perhaps we had better not ask to see it," said Isabel; "if I am not well enough to go to the grove I will drive over and hear it the next morning. I'm so much better, aunt, that Lila and I must have a little concert together before bedtime; so, Gerald, hurry her down, will you? O, here she comes! Red cheeks, bright eyes, and such exquisite smiles! Dear Lila, what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Only thinking."

"They must be beautiful thoughts to produce such an effect."

"They will produce a different effect in the morning, I fear," said kind aunt Ruth; "and I move, sister Mary," she continued, as grandmother Clare came in, "that these girls go directly to bed, except Nellie, who has n't wearied herself with strange fancies."

Isabel laughingly protested against the arrangement, but aunt Ruth was resolute, and went up stairs with them herself, to be sure that they did not occupy the same room and kill themselves with talking.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Away from the dwellings of care-worn men,
The waters are sparkling in wood and glen ;
Away from the chamber and dusky hearth,
The young leaves are dancing in busy mirth ;
Their light stems thrill to the wild-wood strains,
And youth is abroad in my green domains."

If the next day had been got up expressly for the picnic it could n't have been pleasanter.

Many little eyes, opened long before the usual hour, had tearfully mistaken the gray twilight for thick clouds, till the bright sun arose and put all to rights again. The next question was, would one o'clock ever come? At what an immense distance it seemed !

The schools kept during the forenoon, and the dull routine of lessons and recitations went on much as usual ; but, alas, for the blunders made ! Alas, for the blots in the writing-books ! Alas, for the rules against whispering ! Alas, for the patience of the teachers !

The morning finally came to an end, as all mornings must, and teachers and pupils together rejoicingly escaped into the open air.

At one o'clock nearly all the population of Gothard and its suburbs were assembled on the common in front of the church, from whence they were to march in procession to the grove. The old people came first in all the glory of big hats and full-blossomed caps, carrying great palm-leaf fans and huge bunches of fennel. Bright, comely damsels were there from the quiet farm-houses among the hills, as bewitchingly arrayed as if their sole purpose were to craze hopelessly the stalwart young men who came to gaze

on their beauty, and by whom they themselves were attracted hither.

Far lovelier than they, most beautiful of all, came the sweet, rosy children, singing as they marched; the boys in white trousers and blue or green jackets, the little girls in white dresses, with flowers in their hair and wreaths of green leaves and fresh rose-buds around their waists. With these came Nellie, as smiling and radiant as the youngest, and so very pretty in her unadorned loveliness, that Lila, poor plain Lila, who, half sick with feverish anxiety about the prize, walked by her side, looked less attractive than usual.

The grove was like a fairy bower. All the underbrush had been cleared away, and the long tables were loaded with tempting delicacies, and profusely ornamented with flowers. The noble family of oaks that overshadowed them had many years ago chosen the spot for their favorite residence, and the white, red, black, scarlet-leaved and willow-leaved, were all at home on this occasion.

The absence of Isabel, who was more unwell than usual, was a sensible drawback to Lila's enjoyment, and then the flutter of spirits induced by the near approach of the time when the essays were to be read, prevented her from entering at all into the spirit of the scene. She repented having exposed herself to such a trial, but her composition was in the keeping of the Superintendent, and it was too late to regain possession of it.

"What if I should not succeed?" she exclaimed, almost unconsciously, as she stood apart from the crowd; "I should live just as long, and the sun would rise and set just the same. It isn't such an important affair, after all. The others who have written are as anxious as I am, very likely. Well, some of us have got to be disappointed. I wish it was all over, though, and I had got home and was gone to bed with Nellie, and had just fallen asleep for all night; or else I wish I could forget it entirely."

"I wish so too," said the kind voice of aunt Ruth close *by her side*.

Lila started.

"You were thinking aloud, my dear, and a little selfishly too, I'm afraid. Do n't you think there are some here who do not have, as you do, the love and approbation of friends, and who need the sort of encouragement the premium would afford much more than yourself?"

"Yes, aunt, but"—

"But what, my dear?"

"Nothing at all," said Lila, her face suddenly brightening; "perhaps—now—likely as not—I should n't think it strange"—

"Should n't you indeed?" said aunt Ruth, laughing heartily.

"I was thinking," said the child, "that if it were possible for poor Zeno to win the prize I should be more than contented to lose it."

"I suppose it is not impossible."

"No; Gerald thinks his piece very good—only not so good as mine," she added, coloring slightly. "And Gerald is not, like those who will award the premium, impartial. They are obliged to be so, for our names remain a secret till their judgment is given."

"Well, let us forget it for the present. Come this way, Lila. I want to learn the names of some of the flowers—not the cultivated ones; I know those very well. But here are many kinds that I used to gather in the forest and fields fifty years ago. They seem like old friends, but I have forgotten what they are called. Look, Lila, at that charming bouquet just opposite us!"

"O, is it not beautiful! So fresh and pure! Blue gentians, and the bright purple orchis, which is grandma's favorite! See here, aunt. That is the crimson cardinal flower, the last of the season. Is it not gorgeous? Those are ferns, and wherever they grew these wild azaleas bloomed among them. These are anemones, such as I put on your shelf yesterday morning, but these little starry mignonnettes did not grow wild, neither did those wax-balls in the mid-

dle. Aunt,," said Lila, suddenly, " Isabel sent those flowers, I'm sure."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't know as I can tell, but I'm positive that she arranged them. Why, aunt, you don't know how faithless you look?"

"Do I? Well, I am a little incredulous. It is like you, Lila, to connect what is so pure and lovely with the image of your friend. It is because you are naturally fanciful, I suppose."

"It is n't fancy, aunt. There is no one who arranges flowers like Isabel. I have watched her so many times. You may be sure she sent them."

"They are in a very ordinary broken pitcher, my dear."

"Yes," answered Lila, a little disconcerted on perceiving this. "See here," she exclaimed triumphantly, after a moment's hesitation, "here is one of her own rare camelias, so that settles it."

"No it does not, for many others may possess a similar flower. Perhaps this little girl can enlighten us," said aunt Ruth, turning kindly toward a poorly-clad child, who was listening with much apparent interest to their conversation.

"Do you know, little girl, who brought these flowers?"

"I did, ma'am."

"You did?" repeated Lila; "why, where on earth did you get them?"

In the woods and by the little brooks where they grow. If you please, miss, I did not tie them together. Miss Lee did that, and put in some beautiful flowers of her own."

"There, aunt! What do you think now?"

"I think," she answered smilingly, "that you must love Isabel very dearly to be able to recognize so easily any thing she touches. Is Gerald here?"

"Not yet. He said he did n't care about the procession or the collation, and he could study two hours and have ample time to spend here. He gets very little time to study now."

"He did n't try for the palm, I conclude."

"No. He said," replied Lila, laughing, "that it would be cruel in him to detract from the chances of us little ones."

"Indeed! So he didn't try out of benevolence. How much older is he than yourself?"

"Only two years. I am almost fourteen. What is it, aunt, that makes Nellie look so much younger than Gerald? Most people think I am older than her."

"It is her slight figure, partly, and the innocent, almost infantile expression of her countenance."

"She is very beautiful this afternoon. With those white buds in her hair she looks like a May queen."

"When do the children sing, Lila?"

"O, not till the very last! I'm frightened when I think of it, for I am to sing two pieces alone. What shall I do if I have n't courage after I begin? It would be so ridiculous to stop."

"You will do nicely, Lila, if you will forget the crowd and imagine yourself alone or singing to grandpa in the evening at home. If you don't get nervous it will be charming."

"But I am nervous now. I tried to get excused, but Mr. Harrington—he is our Superintendent—would not listen to a word I said. He looked almost displeased because I asked. If I break down and he is quite ashamed of me, perhaps he won't insist the next time."

"I have no fears for you, except that you will be ill tomorrow. What are we waiting so long for?"

"For the minister, Mr. Locke. He is to be here, and they depend on him for a speech. I hope he won't come."

"Why?" inquired aunt Ruth, a little surprised at her tone.

"Because he is so stiff and proud, so unlike our dear old pastor. You would have loved him, aunt, you couldn't have helped it."

"We shall all like Mr. Locke, I dare say, when we become acquainted with him. We must not judge him till we

know him better. But what is the order of exercises? What comes first?"

"Speeches—tiresome, stupid speeches, invited and volunteer; then refreshments; next, O dear! the essays; then a play time for the children, and a great noise of chat and laughter among the old folks. After this we shall be called together, and the minister is to give his opinion of the essays that *almost* get the prize but do n't. Then the Bible is to be awarded, the children sing, and a prayer by the minister is to dismiss us all. Mr. Locke is coming at last. He has kept us all waiting more than an hour. Get a seat as soon as you can, aunt, or you will be obliged to stand over so long. See, grandma is beckoning you."

The afternoon wore away quickly and pleasantly, as such occasions usually do. There was a number of superior compositions among the essays, and as they were read, one after another, all agreed that it would be a difficult task to decide which was the best. But when the last one was read there was not one in the crowd of listeners who was not sure that the fortunate one was its writer. Lila only heard its first sentences. Her heart beat so loudly that she could not listen to it, and very glad was she to hear it announced that the children might for an hour amuse themselves. They dispersed in all directions, crowding round the great swings put up for their use, or in little knots humming over the music they were to sing. By and by—very soon it seemed to all—they heard a table-bell tinkle, tinkle a summons to the company to assemble on the green plat from whence the tables had been removed.

"Why, Lila!" exclaimed Gerald, as she stumbled over a stone and fell forward into his arms. He had but just arrived and had found a convenient seat by the roots of a giant oak just opposite the rude platform that had been erected for the speakers. "What a hurry you are in! Are you hurt?"

"No, indeed. I am confused, and my head is giddy. I *was only in search of a seat.*"

"Well, then, sit down here. It is a good place to listen, and I want to be the first to see your prize."

"O, Gerald!"

"Hush, sister! Mr. Locke is speaking."

The minister stood up as cool and collected as if there had not been a dozen warm young hearts beating painfully in anticipation of what he was about to utter. Few, but very pleasant and kind were the words of praise that he spoke in reference to each essay as he successively named it, but not a word about the coveted Bible till he came to the last—to Lila's. She held her breath, and Gerald clasped tighter the little cold hand which lay in his.

"To this," said the minister, "is awarded the premium. To say that the composition is a chaste and exceedingly-beautiful production would only be to repeat what has before occurred to every person who has listened to it. Still, I have an unpleasant duty to perform in connection with it. A painful conviction has forced itself upon my mind that this beautiful essay is not an original composition. I can not prove it to be borrowed, but I am certain that no child in the Sabbath school, or, indeed, any young person in the parish is capable of originating such a production. I could hardly hope to excel it myself. Therefore, while I am forced to admire its exquisite pathos and delicate imagery, I am grieved that one capable even of making so fine a selection, should in early life evince such marked dishonesty. Let the writer now come forward and receive the prize."

No one stirred. Lila sat perfectly still. Her features were unnaturally composed, but cheek and lip were colorless. She made no reply to the soothing words whispered by Gerald and aunt Ruth, who, with Mrs. Clare, had drawn near to them. She did not stir till Gerald attempted to rise, and she saw in his look the indignation to which he was about to give utterance.

"Don't speak, for my sake, Gerald!"

No other voice could have restrained him, or kept back for a moment the angry words that rose to his lips.

Her name was now called aloud, but still she did not move or in any manner respond to the call. A faint color dawned upon her cheek when she saw Mr. Harrington coming in search of her. A perfect silence reigned throughout the assembly, for there were very few present who were unacquainted with the orphan girl, or who were wholly ignorant of her uncommon genius. The transient, earnest glance that the child raised to the Superintendent's face told how deeply her sensitive nature had been wounded. It seemed to appeal to him against the harsh judgment of the minister.

Every tone of his voice trembled with suppressed feeling, and was distinctly audible amid the deathlike silence as he addressed her.

"Lila!"

She did not reply; she only raised again her appealing eyes to his. She saw in that brief glance that he, at least, did not doubt her genius or her truth.

"Lila, my dear child! I have come to invite your acceptance of the prize which you have so handsomely and deservedly won. Take it, and with it receive the assurance that the love and sympathy of the company present is with you in this undeserved trial."

This was a great deal for the grave, almost stern Superintendent to say.

"Really, Mr. Harrington," interposed the clergyman, "you must allow me to say that my education and habits of thinking and reading render me a fitter judge than yourself in this matter."

Mr. Harrington bowed gravely to the minister, and turned again to Lila.

"Here is the Bible, my dear."

She had now recovered her self-possession, and replied steadily, "If you please, dear sir," she said, "I would rather not have it. It would never again be pleasant to see it. Let it pass to the next. It may make some other *person* very happy. I should be very glad if it were so.

You will, I am sure, excuse me from singing now ; I have not been quite well to-day and must return home. Gerald will go with me," she added, observing his look of concern, "and grandma."

"Wait a moment. Think calmly. Are you sure that when all this excitement has worn off you will not regret having given up the"—

"O, sir, do not speak of it!"

He saw that she was decided and forbore to urge it. He watched her with his grave, thoughtful eyes till she had left the grove, then returning he said aloud, "It is the desire of Miss Lila Wood that the premium be bestowed upon the person whose essay ranks next to hers. Let him come forward. Zeno Bradford!"

"Zeno!" exclaimed his mother aloud, "not *our* Zeno! What does the man mean?" In her amazement she stepped on all the toes in her vicinity, receiving in return an infinity of punches and hearty execrations. "Good gracious! why, he could n't write a line to save his life. Bless me, what a mistake! Sit down, Zeno, fool, and show less!" fairly screamed his excited parent, as, coloring deeply, the bashful boy came forward. "O, sit down, you great dunce! they do n't mean you!"

But it soon appeared that they did mean him, and the astonishment of the audience almost equaled his mother's. Exclamations of wonder were heard on all sides. The Superintendent again spoke, and again a breathless silence held the people.

"I have but a word to say. I wish to state an interesting fact, only yesterday made known to me. Zeno Bradford, now the fortunate possessor of the prize, is indebted for the position he holds to-day to the kindly influence and instructions of Miss Lila Wood. Young as she is, for years she has been his sole teacher, and you will all agree with me that the talent displayed in his fine essay does credit to the efforts of his child instructress."

Nothing more was said, for comment was unnecessary.

The sweet singing of the children served in a measure to restore the spirit of joyous hilarity that had been frightened away, and an occasional half-smothered laugh betrayed the pleasure that some were deriving from Mrs. Bradford's discomfiture.

It would be difficult to describe the feelings of that worthy woman as she wended her solitary way homeward—deep mortification that her inexcusable treatment of her son had thus become notorious, anger toward Mr. Harrington and Zeno both for the exposure, unalloyed hatred toward the orphan girl who had been the instrument of her disgrace, and every now and then a little natural motherly interest in the boy who had thus distinguished himself at her expense; or, rather—and this was the mortifying part of it—without any expense to her. She hardly knew how to meet him. It would not do, she felt, to bestow the usual epithets, “fool” or “dunce,” upon him now. She remembered how her husband had remarked, a year ago, that Zeno was really improved in manner, and that she had prided herself upon it as the result of the judicious training she had given him.

The favorite child, for whose sake poor Zeno had been slighted and abused, had been sent home in disgrace from every school in which he had been placed, and only last week farmer Bradford had paid a round sum to hush up a small robbery committed by him at the village store. “Could it be,” she asked herself, “that, after all, the poor dunce was to be the best prop of their old age? How her husband would triumph over her! Had n’t he always insisted that the dull boy only needed kindness and encouragement to make something of him? What *would* the neighbors say? When she was so intensely enjoying Lila’s supposed humiliation, and chuckling and exulting over the mortification of the Clares, how little did she suspect what was to follow! She slunk into her own house by the back door, conscience-stricken, almost repentant, and very much ashamed. Ah, welladay! it is a troublesome world.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“Faithful and true, with sense beyond thy years
And natural piety that leaned to heaven.”

LILA went directly to bed as soon as she arrived at home. To all the comforting remarks offered by Mrs. Clare or Gerald by the way she had made no reply, except once earnestly begging that they would never speak of the unfortunate essay again. She only desired to be alone, to brood in silence over the injury she had received, and to find an opportunity to analyze her own feelings. She felt quite bewildered; the result of her steady application had been so unexpected.

“Let me be quite alone, dear grandma—I shall be best by myself.”

“No, indeed!” exclaimed the old lady, “I know better than that. You would worry yourself into a fever in two hours. I want you to be up to-morrow morning, bright and fresh. So you just keep quiet.”

She soon prepared and administered a quieting draught with her own hands, and then establishing Gerald in the chamber as nurse till the rest of the family should return, she kissed Lila cheerfully and went below to get tea ready. In spite of her cheerful looks, her kind, motherly old heart beat stoutly with indignation.

“Pretty work, I call this,” said she, as she unconsciously dropped two saucers and broke them both—“very pretty work! I am sure I never want to hear any more of *his* sermons. Why could n’t he have acted like a Christian—to say nothing of common-sense, which he has n’t a spark of—when so many people were by! Poor Lila!”

A very thoughtful nurse was Gerald. He remembered all about Nellie's sad headaches when they lived with their father. How carefully he adjusted the curtains to exclude the brilliant light ! How tenderly he brushed back the hair from her forehead, and bathed her aching temples ! How softly he moved lest the noise should disturb her ! And when at last she wept unrestrainedly he did not attempt to check her. He only soothingly whispered, "My dear little sister !" as he softly kissed the closed eyes.

Blessed tears ! Nature's best method of relief to the over-tasked spirit ! When, quite exhausted, she fell tranquilly asleep, and the wonted sweet smile came back unconsciously to grace her features, he sat still and wondered how she had borne all this without indulging in angry words, or even exclamations of grief.

"It is fine pay for the effort she has made, I must say !" He shook his fist in the old angry manner.

After a while Nellie came home with aunt Ruth and stole in to take his place. She had learned the nature of Lila's trial, and her beautiful eyes were swollen with weeping. Often during the evening did the old ladies and farmer Clare look into the chamber. All were more or less apprehensive of the effect of the day's trouble upon the health of the sensitive child. But the calm, tranquil slumber continued unbroken. It lasted till morning.

Beautiful dreams were hers, of pleasant ramblings in green, lovely places, beneath cloudless skies, and where the very zephyrs only murmured of peace and love.

She awoke early, refreshed and cheerful. For a long time she kneeled by the bedside offering gentle thanksgivings for unnumbered blessings, and humbly adoring the Divine Hand that had permitted yesterday's trial—yesterday's rebuke of her pride and selfishness ; for Lila was learning in the school of Christ to be meek and humble. The early religious instruction that she had received, both from her departed mother and at Rosedale, had begun to bear fruit.

Encouraged by the genial influence and lovely example

of aunt Ruth, who had often, since her coming, besought her to love the Savior, she had more earnestly and perseveringly than ever before sought the Lord, and now with trembling joy indulged the hope that she had passed from death unto life.

So she prayed long and fervently that all bitterness and ill-will might be taken from her heart, and that she might feel only love and respect for the minister, who, every Sabbath, was to break unto her the bread of eternal life. Her appearance surprised as well as gratified her friends when she went down stairs.

"Why, Fairy!" exclaimed the farmer, "you look better than usual."

"I feel better, grandpa, than I have since the thunder-storm. Such a long night has rested me all over. What a beautiful morning! Gerald, do you suppose Isabel will be able to come over to-day? I must have a long lesson and make up for lost time."

"I do n't know," he replied, "but Nero came with this little note for you very early. Perhaps it will tell you."

Lila read aloud: "Come to me this morning, dear Lila. I am quite restored, but aunt Thorpe will not believe it, and will not allow the pony to be saddled. So you *must* come if grandma can spare you. I have a splendid plant for you, a night-blooming cereus. I am too lazy to watch its blooming, so I deliver it up to you. Come early. I've some new music for this morning's lesson. ISABEL."

"Can you spare me, grandma? I am afraid you will get very tired if I leave you this morning."

"I can manage somehow to get along, if Isabel wants you."

"But, grandma, there is more work than usual because we were gone yesterday."

"Never mind if there is," said aunt Ruth; "I'll take your place. I need a little exercise. I'm getting quite rusty. Now, Lila, what objection are you trying to conjure up? Do n't you think I could do with a little showing?"

Lila laughed. "It will fatigue you."

"Nonsense! I shall really enjoy it, so you just eat your breakfast and be off. Gerald is going to the village and you can ride. He will be glad of your company, I dare say. Won't you, Gerald?"

"I can not tell. It's a new idea and requires consideration. Do you think, Lila, that you'll promise to behave well if I take you?"

"How ridiculous you talk, Gerald! Let us take Nellie."

But no, Nellie declined going, and on being urged shook her bright curls positively. She was too busy. What weighty matter could it be that so occupied her?

Three days ago she had engaged for a week one of the small back chambers for her own private use. No one was to be admitted but her brother. He had spent an evening and part of a morning there, pounding and thumping away at something so that the old house rattled all over. Quite mysterious Nellie looked when she ventured down to her meals, and very happy too.

Lila was sure that the mystery, whatever it was, was an innocent one, and, occupied with her music lessons and her essay, she had scarcely thought of it till now. She could n't help laughing at Nellie's sly monitions to her brother to be very, *very* secret.

She found her young teacher among her plants. The bay-window of the sitting-room opened into a conservatory where Isabel spent much of her time when the weather did not admit of her going abroad. She was exceedingly fond of flowers, and was never weary of learning from the gardener and pointing out to Lila their elegant varieties.

She was bending over some geraniums, and for the first time Lila was painfully struck by the pallor of her complexion and by the sharpened outline of her sweet, tranquil features. She smiled her welcome as her young friend came in.

"I did not expect you so soon. Is it not a charming morning?"

"You are ill, dear Isabel," said Lila, anxiously—"very ill, I am sure. How very thin and pale you have become since—since yesterday morning!"

"Have I?" she replied, cheerfully. "I think it must rather be your eyes that have grown keen, for I am really no worse. You know I am never well."

"But not so ill as this. I'm sure your cheek was not so thin when you first came here. You came here to get well. Are you not getting better?" she asked excitedly.

"Lila, has it then never occurred to you that my illness is of a serious nature, and that it is one from which I may never recover?"

"Never before. O, dear Isabel!"

"Do not feel so badly about it. God may see fit to spare me many days yet. We can not tell. There may be many happy days in store for us. Let us, at any rate, enjoy this one."

"I can not. This is so new, so strange, so dreadful! I shall never be happy again. O Isabel!" she exclaimed with sudden energy, "can there be nothing done to cure you? Are you not neglecting yourself?"

"I have tried numberless remedies, Lila, and am still taking such medicines as are ordered for me. If I get no permanent benefit from them, they at least give present relief. I am very comfortable generally, and suffer, I presume, as little pain as yourself. So, please do not look so horrified."

"What if you should droop and die as mamma did! She had the same rich color in her cheeks that you have afternoons. Like you she was so very pale in the mornings. O dear! O dear!" sobbed poor Lila, as she threw herself upon the ground and gave herself up to uncontrollable grief.

What was yesterday's trial compared with this?

Isabel was astonished at the violence of her emotions. She had become accustomed to the sad idea that now, for the first time, presented itself to her young pupil.

"Lila," she said, very gently, "my dear sister, can you

then so distrust the goodness of our Heavenly Father?

- Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The child started—she had not thought of this.

"O Isabel! dearest! if he would but take me too."

"You must not feel so—indeed you must not. If you love me you will strive against such feelings. Be my better angel, my sister, and when I am weakest strengthen me with holy, loving words and prayers. What a comfort, what a blessing you will be to me if you can conquer your regret for my early summons to the home of the blessed! And for to-day consider that there is no immediate danger of the evil you dread. The new physician that papa brought out yesterday speaks very hopefully. He does not despair of curing me, although he is not sanguine about that, but he says that I shall last for years yet if I obey all his directions."

"Do you believe it?" asked Lila, anxiously.

"I am somewhat doubtful—invalids often are, I believe; but that is no reason for your being faithless. Come, let us have our lesson. And see! here is the beautiful plant that you are to carry home. Papa brought it for you yesterday, at my request. Is it not strange that it blooms only at night? When it begins to open you must let me know, so that I can come and spend the night at Rosedale. Now for the fairy's wand to pick out the lesson."

"Are you sure that you are well enough?"

"Well enough! why, I'm going home with you and Gerald when he returns. So we shall have to hurry. Do you like this marble vase? I am going to keep it at Rosedale to hold the wild flowers that I sketch. Come into the parlor. The lesson! the lesson!"

Lila smiled brightly. Hope whispered that Isabel's case was not yet desperate; she might recover. The child listened and believed it, still the dark shadow was not wholly dispersed; it often returned during the morning to depress her spirits and she found it very difficult to retain any idea of the lesson that she was practicing. For the

first time she found the music tiresome, and longed for it to be ended so that she could gather fresh comfort from the hopeful smiles of her friend.

Mrs. Thorpe very reluctantly consented to allow Isabel to return with her.

"I would not persist, aunt," said the gentle invalid, "if it did not make me really better to go. Why, I feel almost well by the time I get in sight of the dear old house. The exercise revives me, and the change of scene helps me, too, I suppose."

"Well, I expect I shall have to consent, and as the grass is quite dry now it may not injure you. I think you will find it as pleasant as if I had yielded to your crazy wish of riding to Rosedale before sunrise."

"Perhaps so, but, dear aunt, the fields and lanes are so lovely when the sun first peeps over the hills, and the flowers are all sparkling with dew, and, besides, it is so sweet to take the air when it is fresh and pure before any one else gets it."

"Our Gothard doctor says, Isabel, that you must not go out if the air is damp at all, if you desire to recover."

"I stay in to please you, aunty, not the doctor. He said the other day that I must stay in a close room—the air regulated by a thermometer—a fire if a cool breeze peeped in by chance, and a dozen other ridiculous things. As if God didn't know how to make the air fit for his creatures to breathe, but he must improve upon it. What is it that so amuses you, Lila?"

"When you spoke of the doctor, it made me think of Irish Mat—Mat Marooney, you know. Yesterday, before the picnic, I went down to old Nannie Lee's, on Back-street. I had hardly left her door when I met the doctor going there, and stopped to answer his questions about her. He has a somewhat pompous manner, you will recollect, and Mat, who was trudging home with a great basket on his arm, stopped and surveyed him quite impertinently, I thought. He came directly up to us, and setting down

his basket, pushed back his old cap and hair together, planted his feet as far apart as ever he could, and his hands upon his hips, and then stood gazing up into the doctor's face without once winking, I believe. When the doctor left me and passed into the house, Mat turned his wide stare upon me. 'And sure, miss, it's a wooden one he is!' he exclaimed, as soberly as if he had been the foreman of a jury and were delivering its verdict."

Isabel and her aunt laughed heartily.

"What did you say to him?" inquired Mrs. Thorpe.

"Nothing. Before I could stop laughing so as to speak at all he was gone."

As Gerald did not yet come, the young friends walked down the long avenue at the end of the house, to obtain a view of the principal street.

"Do you know, dear," asked Isabel, carelessly, as she paused to replace a comb which had fallen from her hair—"do you know who got the prize yesterday?"

Lila started and colored. The disagreeable subject had not been mentioned to her since the previous afternoon.

"Now, don't look so flurried. I know all about its being awarded to you, and about your very natural—if not very wise—refusal to take it. Mr. Harrington and Gerald were here last evening."

"Mr. Harrington and Gerald!" repeated Lila.

"Yes; is there any thing strange in that? Mr. Harrington is our neighbor, you know, and is often here."

"But Gerald was at home with me. O, that was before night, and I was asleep all the evening! And so they told you all, I suppose."

"Yes, and Mr. Harrington read your essay to me. Gerald had it in his pocket to return to you. I thought it very fine, and very original, too, so that answers the inquiry of your eyes. Mr. Harrington says it must be printed, so just prepare yourself to wake up some morning, as Lord Byron says he did, and find yourself famous."

"Notorious, you mean. I am that now, I think. I

found the manuscript on my table this morning and burnt it."

"Burnt it! Lila, how could you?"

"The sight of it was so painful. Do not let us speak of it, dear Isabel, or my proud, bad thoughts will all come back."

Isabel kissed her affectionately. "But my dear, noble girl, you have not answered my question. Do you know who got the prize?"

"No, I have n't an idea."

"Zeno Bradford."

"Are you in earnest? Do you really mean it?" said Lila, stopping short in her walk and looking eagerly into the face of her friend.

"What beaming eyes you now bring to bear upon the subject! You are changed in a moment. I am going to paint your likeness one of these days and catch that expression."

"I am so very glad!" said Lila—"so very happy on his account. I do n't regret any thing that occurred now. It will so encourage him, poor boy! How glad I am!"

"And yet," pursued Isabel, quietly, "as soon as it was understood what instruction he had received, no one thought it strange that, next to yourself, he should be the successful claimant."

Lila opened her beaming eyes wider than ever.

"Instruction, Isabel?"

"Yes, instruction. How prettily you color! Is the word so interesting? Mr. Harrington said that the wonder and grotesque excitement of Mrs. Bradford and the amazement of the people made one of the most ludicrous scenes that he had ever witnessed. Her hopping about reminded him of the unwieldy gambols of a dancing bear. Can you not imagine, Lila, how she looked?"

"Yes, but about the instruction he had received. Who mentioned it?"

"Mr. Harrington. He soon found that the lad was in

much greater danger than yourself of being considered a plagiarist, and to save him from that injustice, and also as an act of justice to you, he gave the particulars of his singular education. There was nothing that so delighted the crowd as Mrs. Bradford's discomfiture. You know how generally she is disliked. It was so comical that uncle Thorpe, who is usually so taciturn, fairly roared with laughter. Are you struck dumb, Lila?"

"Almost. Was n't I exhibited in all sorts of ways? I shall hardly dare to appear in Church again after being made so conspicuous. Did Mr. Harrington tell you where he obtained his information?"

"From Zeno himself."

"I can understand now the reason of grandpa's sly wink and smiles this morning. I thought it was almost unkind in him to act, on this particular day, as if he were half tickled to death. He actually hates Mrs. Bradford, I'm afraid. Do n't you think, Isabel, that she will love me after this?"

"I hope so, indeed. I think her son will at any rate, and I told Gerald so last evening."

"Gerald is to be his teacher now," said Lila, gravely.

"If he remains at home farmer Bradford told uncle that he should have all the advantages that could be obtained to finish his education. 'And,' said he, 'neighbor Thorpe, as much as my old woman is cut up about it, I thank God that he put it into the heart of that orphan girl to try and resky him from ignorance. She's been the saving of him!' Uncle said his eyes were full of honest tears as he asked God to bless you."

There were tears in the child's eyes now, but she made no reply, only drawing her bonnet closer in order to conceal her face.

"Look, Lila, there is Gerald driving up. If you can carry the plant we will meet him at the gate. I'm going, aunt."

Mrs. Thorpe came to the window. "Well, my love, do

be careful. Miss Lila, ask your aunt or grandmother to take care of her. When shall I send for you, Belle?"

"O, not to-day. It is noon now. To-morrow, perhaps, if Tom is at liberty."

"If I hear very good accounts of you I will send the pony instead of the carriage."

"Thank you, dear aunt. Hurry, Lila, he's waiting."

What a pleasant ride, and what a short delightful afternoon it was! Seen through the undimmed kaleidoscope of youth, how very beautiful were all the objects around them! And the future? It was forgotten, or if by chance it occurred to the mind, its dark impenetrable vistas were radiant with the glorious sunlight of hope and joyous anticipation.

Gerald was at leisure, and as an unusual favor admitted the young ladies into his study; patiently allowing them to examine all his precious books, and winking manfully at the grievance of beholding them at last in a wrong place or a wrong position on the shelves.

Toward night Nellie's great secret was revealed, and her privacy explained, by the appearance in the parlor of a new music-stool, covered with some of her choicest embroidery. It was a very desirable convenience, for hitherto Lila had been obliged to pile cushions in a chair whenever she practiced; and to please the fair mute girl, they all joined in almost extravagant expressions of admiration as one after another examined the embroidery or vainly attempted to peep beneath the covering for the rougher work of Gerald.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I marvel, Jeanie Morrison,
Gin I hae been to thee
As closely twined wi' earliest thochts
As ye hae been to me."

THE Autumn came on with its cool breezes, ripened sheaves, and lengthened evenings.

Since Lila had become aware of Isabel's danger, she had greatly dreaded the approach of the season of the falling leaf and dying flower; she shuddered at the thought of meeting no more the sweet, affectionate smile that now daily greeted her, or of listening no more to the pleasant voice of her lovely instructress.

Contrary to all their expectations, Isabel seemed considerably stronger as the Autumn drew on. Her father came out every week with her new physician, and the village doctor's old-fashioned methods of *shortening* the sufferings of the consumptive were neither listened to nor adopted.

Mrs. Thorpe, and indeed all of Isabel's friends, excepting aunt Ruth, were frightened half out of their wits when the invalid was ordered to bathe daily in cold water, and to walk and ride as much as possible in the open air, avoiding close carriages as well as close rooms, and disregarding all changes of the atmosphere.

And when to this unheard-of imprudence was added total abstinence from the usual array of medicines, and permission to eat temperately of any thing she might relish, the village gossips joined with their doctor in his expressions of horror, and immediately consigned her to the silent grave.

But aunt Ruth declared that there was now a little hope in her case, and even tried to induce Lila, who was far too

fragile, to adopt the same means of toughening herself. This could not be done, however, till the prejudices of grandma Clare were overcome. The old lady did not interdict bathing; her scrupulous habits of neatness had always made a daily bath, in her opinion, a very important part of the toilet; but cold bathing was quite another thing, and she would on no consideration allow the child to "expose her health" by trying it. Even the tepid bath that she permitted must have a few drops of alcohol in it to prevent her taking cold.

The village gossips were set against any bath that should affect the whole person. Who ever heard of such nonsense! They had all their days confined their ablutions to their hands and faces, excepting once a week, when they had extended the same favor to their necks and feet. Experience had proved that this was sufficient. From the dread of cold water manifested by them, a stranger might have supposed that the whole population were afflicted with hydrophobia.

"They'll wash themselves all away, if they an't keerful," said Goody Green, a famous gossip and oracle of Gothard. "I've hearn of such things afore. There was Maggie White's baby now; it was born into the world a poor, sickly creetur; and when it was hard on to a year old it didn't weigh a pound more than when it was born. Its old looks, and wee, skinny face were a sight, I tell ye. Well, some fool told Maggie that water was better than sperrit to bathe its back and brace it up. Well, she tried it, and rubbed and scrubbed the poor leetle innocent till it actilly died. Folks *do* say that Maggie an't uncommon bright naturally, and I, for one, believe it." And the old lady took a larger pinch of snuff than usual to clinch her opinion.

Aunt Ruth now began to think of returning home. She had prolonged her visit much beyond her original intention, and instead of spending a part of the Summer, as she had expected, with a brother in Ohio, she had lingered at Rose-

dale till the heat was over, and now began to feel attracted toward home. She felt reluctant to leave her sister and the dear young people who had so interested her during her stay, but in spite of this her thoughts were constantly straying homeward to the peculiar privileges of her Church and to the loved association of old familiar friends. She began to dream of home, to allude to it often, sometimes when conversing on subjects quite remote from it. This homeward tendency had been more than usually apparent for some days, and grandma Clare was therefore quite taken by surprise, when, one morning, aunt Ruth announced her determination to start next week for Ohio.

"You are not in earnest, Ruth!"

"To be sure I am. I thought it all over and over last night, and made up my mind to go. It is a beautiful season to travel—much pleasanter than the hot Summer; besides, I do n't like to put it off to another year. At our age, Mary, we can't count on the future. Tom is ten years older than you, and even if I should be able to go to Ohio next Summer he may not be there to welcome me. Old people must do what they do at once, if ever. So I have made up my mind to go now."

"Alone! O, Ruth! how can you think of such a thing?"

"I don't calculate to go alone; though I should n't be afraid to travel alone to Texas. But I expect you to go with me, Mary."

"Me!" almost screamed the old lady, hastily setting down the dish of fruit that she was paring; "why, a million of gold would n't hire me; so that's settled!"

Her horror-stricken looks were quite amusing to her sister. But in vain were coaxings, expostulations, entreaties, and half-threatenings; grandma Clare was resolute.

"I would as soon start on a journey to the moon. Is n't every paper full of railroad accidents and steamboat explosions? You can say what you please, sister, about feeling *safe and easy* in such perilous circumstances; that is no

sign that you will escape unhurt. Quite the contrary, I think, for every account of such accidents tells us that they all occurred at unexpected times, when the hapless passengers had no thought of danger."

"There is no more danger, Mary, than by any other mode of conveyance."

"Well, I have never yet tempted Providence by risking my life in a railroad car, and if I can't see Thomas without the probability of traveling home in a coffin I shall wait patiently for a meeting on the other side of Jordan, where, thank God, railroads are unknown."

"Well, I suppose it is useless to urge you if you are so timid, but you will permit me to take Lila?"

Grandma shook her head, but made no other reply.

"You are not so cruel, Mary, as to let me go alone."

"You were not in the least afraid just now."

"But I may be ill on the road, and it would not be very agreeable to depend for care on strangers. Besides, the dear child needs the change. Don't you see how pale she is?"

"She was always pale, and she is growing rapidly now. When she gets her growth she will be well enough, I dare say."

"I am afraid not, Mary. I fear she will be a life-long invalid."

"How you talk, Ruth! You are enough to scare one to death. What can possess you to say such dismal things?"

"A little seasonable alarm, Mary, often prevents untold suffering. Do you not observe how the child stoops? In walking, on horseback, when sitting at work, at her books, or her music, it is always the same, and her countenance often tells of pain, though she never speaks of any. Yesterday, when fastening her dress I observed a decided curvature of the spine. She is quite one-sided already. Have you not thought of this before, Mary?" asked aunt Ruth, as grandma turned away to hide her tears.

"Yes, often and often, Ruth; and so has John. It

worries him dreadfully. But what can we do? She may outgrow it."

Aunt Ruth shook her head doubtfully.

"John is prejudiced and so am I against doctors. If we call in our village doctor to see her," said grandma, "he will cup her, and blister her, and make setons, and issues, and croton-oil sores, till she is scarred from head to foot, like a child's first copy."

"Perhaps not. Be charitable, Mary."

"Charitable! Look at poor Mary Leslie. She has been under his care four years. There is nothing left for him to experiment upon but her skin and bones; and so little skin as to be hardly worth speaking of. The poor, patient lamb is a sight to behold. I never look at her sweet, pale face without feeling that the doctor is murdering her by inches, and that I should enjoy seeing him hung for it."

"Poor thing!" said aunt Ruth, compassionately; "will she recover?"

"Recover! How is it possible unless he stops tormenting her? He is leaving her to herself for a week or two now, so that she may gain strength for a fresh cauterization somewhere."

"For a what?"

"It is one of the big, heathenish words that he uses when he is going to do something uncommon awful; it means—and so do all the rest—burning, or pinching, or cutting into a body's flesh, if they have any, into their bones if they have n't. Now John is determined, and so am I, that if Fairy dies in our house she shall die a natural death. There shall be no murdering done here; so you need not recommend medical advice, Ruth, I tell you at once."

"I am not going to do so. She does not need it now. But you must not judge of all physicians by your village doctor. Dr. Hamilton, Isabel's medical adviser, would be as much opposed to the old-school method of torturing a patient as yourself. It is getting quite obsolete among those *of the faculty* who are at all distinguished for their skill

and success. Let me undertake Lila's case for the present. I can prescribe all that is necessary. And I recommend for her a journey under the care of a certain old maid of her acquaintance, who will superintend her exercise, diet, and bathing, and who will pay strict attention to her regaining a healthy, erect figure. She shall, if possible, return with an appetite that will appreciate any thing eatable, instead of, as now, daintily rejecting delicacies. She will only be absent a month or six weeks at most. Come, Mary, say at once that she may go, so that we can commence our traveling arrangements."

"I do n't believe she would leave her music and Isabel for a dozen journeys."

"It is your consent I want, not hers. Isabel can go too, if she will. It will do her a world of good. Since she gave up dosing, and took so resolutely to cold bathing, and the open air, she is much stronger. Riding on horseback was Mr. Wesley's remedy for consumption, and Dr. Hamilton relies much on it in Isabel's case. She and Lila ought to live in the saddle for years, only getting down to sleep. Come, Mary, just say at once that Fairy can go."

"I will ask John. You are such a schemer, Ruth, that you bewilder me. You are almost equal to Allan Lewis. He will have his way at all events. He is so persevering—always coming it over John in reference to these children nobody knows how."

"Not always, Mary. You forget his wishes for Gerald. It is a pity that John won't yield to him, for the poor boy is often quite unhappy. And he has done so much by himself, and is so talented, that I feel almost as bad as Mr. Lewis does about it. I would pay for his going to college myself if John would let me."

"I am very sorry, Ruth, but I can not help it. I would sooner undertake to move Chestnut Mountain than attempt to turn his mind when once he is fixed."

"Farmer Bradford is going to send Zeno to college; so he told Gerald when he came to recite last evening."

"Ah, that is what made Gerald so low-spirited this morning! But how is he to be fitted to enter? Going away to school?"

"No, his father is to pay Gerald liberally for superintending his studies."

"I am very glad. I can understand why Gerald, poor boy, did not tell me of it. Here comes John, Ruth, and you had better propose your plan about Lila. I will leave you to do battle by yourself."

Farmer Clare hemmed, and coughed, and reasoned, and meditated, and strode up and down the long kitchen a dozen times ere he finally capitulated. Seeing that aunt Ruth was determined never to raise the siege till he submitted, and finding in a short time that his ammunition was exhausted and all supplies cut off, observing also that fresh guns were continually mounted upon the enemy's battery, like a wise man, for once in his life, he lowered his colors and gave in.

Victorious here, aunt Ruth went straight over to sit down before Squire Thorpe's citadel. But here there was not the least opposition to contend with, for Dr. Hamilton and Mr. Lee were both there and united in cordially recommending the plan.

"Change of scene and air is better for you than medicine, Miss Isabel," said the Doctor, "and I shall depend on Miss Russell to see that you obey my directions to the letter while you are absent. It will be a relief to me to have you start off somewhere, for Mr. Lee persists in dragging me out here every week to see if I can discover any fresh roses on your cheeks."

Both Isabel and Lila were charmed with aunt Ruth's plan, and nothing was to be heard from morning till night but their romantic anticipations of the journey before them. Nothing but the absolute necessity of assisting in preparing her wardrobe and in packing her trunk could suffice to chain Lila's thoughts for a moment to the present. If she had been going to start on a voyage around the world she could *not have been* more enthusiastic.

Gerald and Nellie united with the farmer in assuming the most rueful looks that human sagacity could invent, and Zeno's sorrowful visage was a melancholy sight indeed. Gerald felt hurt that Lila could leave home so cheerfully. He would not allow to himself that he felt sorry that she could leave *him* so easily; but their pleasant home, where she was so valued and beloved, how could she bear to go away? How could she so joyfully anticipate the hours of absence? He was about to speak to her of this, when he suddenly remembered his own eagerness to enter upon a college course, far from Rosedale and its endearing attractions, and prudently remained silent.

Still, he could not help regarding her gladsome looks on the morning of her departure as an evidence of the slight hold that he possessed upon her affections, and he felt a strange wish to say or do something to cloud the cheerfulness that had always seemed so lovely a trait in her character. He went gloomily enough to his work, counting the days that must intervene before the arrival of her first letter. It had been agreed on all sides that she should write to Gerald, as he would have to be scribe for the household in replying.

Lila's letters are, unfortunately, the sole records of the journey and visit; so, with Gerald's consent, large extracts from them will be inserted here to connect our narrative. From Lila's letter No. 1 we read:

"DEAR GERALD,—I do n't know exactly how to date my letter, for we are crossing Lake Erie. We are not very far from Cleveland, I expect, so I must hurry and scribble as fast as possible. You know I promised grandma to have a letter ready to mail as soon as we should arrive at her brother's. I think I do n't like traveling. I have been watching the strange things around me till I am quite tired. I could n't have got along at all comfortably if it had not been for a pretty, imaginary picture that my fancy has been drawing this two hours of the old, old times when the wild Indian alone inhabited the shores of this inland sea, and his

canoe was the only keel that cleft its dark waters. All the romantic spots along the coast I have selected as the probable sites of their dusky wigwams, and I have felt more than ever indignant at the injustice that has deprived them of their forest homes and ancient hunting-grounds.

"It seems an age since we left home. How snug and cozy Rosedale looked as we drove away! I'm sure we've seen nothing so pleasant since. We've had no quiet, no rest, and I consider myself fortunate in having had no appetite, for I have seen nothing eatable since we left Albany.

"Who do you think was our traveling companion on the Hudson? Who undertook the care of our baggage and of ourselves, too, at Albany, and saw us safely on board of the cars for Buffalo? None other than Mr. Allan Lewis. Isabel says he is like the good genii in the Arabian tales, who always appear just when they are most needed.

"Immediately after going on board of the boat, aunty and Isabel disposed themselves comfortably on a couple of sofas in the ladies' cabin, and being fatigued with the long ride to Newburg, dropped asleep. But every thing was so new and strange to me—for I had never been on the water before—that I could not close my eyes, so I stole softly from the room, and went up stairs into a long saloon where were quite a number of people, some reading, some writing, but the greater part doing nothing. This apartment was splendidly furnished with plush-covered chairs, and sofas, and marble-topped tables, covered with books and papers, and vases of flowers. I was too desirous to behold the country through which we were passing, to stop to examine them, and, besides, I felt very awkward. I felt as if the other passengers were at home and my coming in was an intrusion—as if I ought to be introduced to them. Then I blundered so about the mirrors, of whose existence I was quite unconscious, taking them for doors leading into similar beautiful rooms to that in which we were. I supposed that the way out must be through them, so, bowing to my reflection in the *glass*, which I mistook for a very plain young stranger, I

attempted to pass it. You know how often we have seen the bees and flies attempt a passage through the window panes at home. Poor insects! I shall never laugh at their folly again. I felt myself blush all over. I am sure that even my hair must have been quite rosy. In stepping back I came into collision with the elbow of a gentleman and knocked his book out of his hand. As he turned suddenly, my vail attached itself to a button or hook of his traveling cloak, and my hat being untied, off it came, to the great amusement of the company, who giggled audibly. I did not blame them in the least, for I am sure that I looked as foolish and ridiculous as possible. At last the gentleman succeeded in bringing a little order out of the vortex of confusion that I had created, and returned my hat as politely as if he had borrowed it, and was under great obligations for my kindness in lending it. I raised my eyes to apologize, and met the quiet and, this time, very roguish eyes of Mr. Lewis.

“‘O, Fairy!’ he said, himself replacing my hat and turning me so as to avoid the observation of the company, ‘so this is the way you take to awaken me. I have been dozing over that dull book for an hour. I am quite ready, my dear, to accompany you.’”

“He drew my hand, which trembled sadly, through his arm, and, before I could reply, led me out of the saloon into the open air. It was a delightful place; the upper deck screened us from the sun, and the beautiful shores of the Hudson were in full view. He did not refer to my awkward adventure, and I soon felt at ease. He sat down by my side, and, pointing out the chief objects of interest or beauty in the ever-changing landscape, made the time fly imperceptibly. He was quite curious to know all I could tell him about you, Gerald, and about your progress in study, of which, of course, I knew nothing. He asked many questions, too, about Nellie—if she were perfectly happy and quite well, etc.

“At last, as if the thought had just occurred to him, he asked if I had any friends on board, adding that he knew

several of mamma's relatives. I told him that aunt Ruth and Isabel were asleep in the cabin, that we were emigrating to the West, and that I would go directly and call them. This he would not allow, saying that it would spoil a nice plan of his, which was to join me in some song. I was quite frightened at first. How could I sing with him who knew so much, and who would detect the least false expression? But as he insisted, I thought it best to do as he wished, for I was sure he would require nothing wrong.

"We sang Lord Byron's Farewell to England. You will remember the piece; it is taken from Childe Harold. There were only a few persons standing near when we commenced, but there was a crowd in a few minutes. I did not wonder at it, for his deep bass was so rich and musical that I longed to stop singing to hear it better. He says that music is much clearer and sweeter on the water than on land; that the sound seems to be mellowed and purified by it. He told me that when he was a boy he used to listen evening after evening to the solitary notes of a single flute across the lake from L. You remember how we were delighted at the same place last Summer with the song of a boatman and its echoes among the hills?

"Aunt Ruth and Isabel came to our concert with the rest, and very much surprised were they to find me in such pleasant company. Afterward, if you will believe me, they gave Mr. Lewis a full history of that unfortunate essay, of Zeno's success, and, worst of all, of my keeping school for his benefit. I was going to run away, but he put his arm around me and detained me. I stole but one glance at his face, for mine was on fire again, but I am sure there were tears in his eyes. It was like him to pity poor Zeno, but somehow his interest in the subject confused me. In my bewilderment I said to him, 'O, do n't! pray do n't, cousin Allan!' which sudden assumption of relationship on my part appeared to please him mightily. We were all sorry to part with him at Albany.

"*The journey by railroad to Buffalo was very tiresome.*

The country may be charming or otherwise, for I took no more note of it than you can do by sitting in the chimney-corner. How could I notice any thing particularly when it would be out of sight before I could well get my eyes on it? Why, I have seen more of Western New York in my dreams at home than can be observed in a dozen such dizzy flights across it.

"And now that we are on the water again I am in no mood to observe. In the language of an old lady near me, 'I'm clean tuckered out.' If I were a young lady, instead of a child, I might congratulate myself on having made a conquest, for a tall, young man, who came on board at Painesville, seems unable to remove his eyes from me. I can feel his looks when I look another way. Then it is so natural, when we find ourselves particularly watched, to steal glances in the direction of the observer, that, although he invariably drops his eyes when they meet mine, it happens that we exchange glances rather frequently. Sometimes I fancy he is about to address me. Aunt Ruth seems to interest him equally with myself, but our pretty Isabel passes unnoticed. Ah, Gerald, you will not make me believe again that disagreeable fib about my not being handsome!

"But we are close by Cleveland, and must prepare to go ashore. Our gentleman is to land here, too, I see. If he proposes to aunt or me I will let you know in my next. One letter a week if you answer promptly—not any if you do n't. There is any number of kisses inclosed in this, which you will please to distribute impartially. Only one—from aunt Ruth—is for you."

Another letter accompanied the first, from which the following abstract is subjoined:

"I think, Gerald dear, that you have never been on board a canal-boat. Be persuaded by one who loves your soul, to adopt any means of conveyance during the whole

of your mortal existence before you resort to this. Tired as I was of rail-car and steamboat, it needed just this to fill up the measure of my afflictions. Such a slow, humdrum progress through such a flat, humdrum country! Aunty and Isabel enjoyed it. Indeed, they have enjoyed the whole tour, and persist in imputing my lack of pleasure to the want of sleep. Till we arrived here last night I have slept only a moment at a time since I left home, while they have got at least two dollars' worth of sound sleep out of every bed that they have occupied. I might have slept the whole distance on the canal but for the attentions of the young gentleman who was so charmed with us on the lake, and who, like a faithful cavalier, seemed resolved to see us safe home. I was dozing nicely, and was just entering the borders of the land of Nod, when, what must he do but rummage all over the bit of a cabin for cloaks, shawls, and blankets! A tempting little bunk he built of them, and although I was again as wide awake as possible, aunt Ruth would not permit me to decline his proffered kindness, so I was just stowed away for ballast in the bottom of the boat.

"Then aunty and the stranger sat down to get acquainted with each other. It soon came out that they were not exactly strangers, for he proved to be a grandson of her brother's. And it was to his home, his own father's house, which was also the residence of the old gentleman, that we were bound. We found that he had a reason for regarding us so attentively, and that he was not in love at all. He had detected—or fancied that he had—a resemblance to his family in our looks. Think of that! In *my* looks, Gerald!

"Well, we were glad enough to put ourselves under his guidance, for beyond Akron we knew nothing. When we arrived there and left the boat our acquaintance had progressed considerably. What with sundry inquiries in reference to 'uncle John'—as Charles Russell calls grandpa—and dim but affectionate reminiscences of aunt Molly, we contrived to cheat old father Time of at least an hour of his prosy lingering. From Akron we had still twelve miles

to ride over indescribable roads, overflowing with rich mud, that aunt Ruth says 'would be of some use, now, if it could be plastered upon the sterile soil of Massachusetts.' Its utility—so far as we were now concerned—she did n't pretend to advocate.

"Cousin Charles had an open wagon and two stout horses awaiting him here, and the carriage proved capacious enough to contain us all. It was almost sundown, and the gathering clouds promised us a dark, murky evening.

"'Had we not better wait here till morning?' asked cousin Charles, coming into the cold, dingy building built for the accommodation of such travelers as do not mean to stay long; 'the weather looks unpromising. I think it will be a wet night—a dark one we are tolerably sure of.'

"'Stay here!' we all exclaimed together, looking around rather dolefully upon the few chairs and clumsy settees that furnished the room.

"'No, not here. I can find a more comfortable place if you decide to remain.'

"Aunt Ruth went out to take a survey of the clouds, and a fat woman with a baby in her arms came in and walked round the room; sniffing the air like a loot hound. We felt no disposition to imitate her example, for the compound of execrable smells that, perforce, entered our nostrils was scarcely endurable. How they were produced, or from whence they sprung, we could not discover, but none of us doubted our proximity to one of those manufactories where all the abominable scents of the whole earth are collected in one huge caldron and boiled down together. Our room—cousin Charles has since informed us—adjoined that of a practical chemist.

"'I can't go this!' said the woman, who had for a moment been trying, by shaking and scolding, to quiet the babe which had set up a deafening roar, 'I'll go afoot to Cleveland afore I'll wait for the boat here. Why, it's a perfect noysance!'

"Aunt Ruth came in with very encouraging accounts of

the weather ; she had seen bits of blue sky, but was uncertain in what direction ; she had comforted herself all day, she said, with the idea of being, at night, safe under her brother's roof, and if cousin Charles felt willing to risk himself he might harness his horses at once.

“ We were soon packed into the wagon, baggage and all. We tried to forget our fatigues and to reflect only upon the near completion of our journey ; and as we rode along I sang all the pretty songs I knew, to sustain the spirits of the company. I was on the point of improvising one for the occasion, when the rain came down upon us in torrents. We were in a wild, uninhabited region, which, however, the darkness wholly hid from us. The rain did n't come in drops, like your puny showers at Rosedale, but in great jets—in tubfuls. Cool streams gently trickled down our backs, and rivulets dashed in foaming cascades from the ends of our noses. You know how much we have heard about the immense water privileges of Ohio. Well, this was one of them. It gave us an opportunity to test fully the hydro-pathic system.

“ It rained all the rest of the way, but the moon came out beautifully to greet us just as we arrived. It was after midnight, and of course every body had gone to bed hours before, but cousin Charles soon aroused his parents and Janet, the hired girl, who gave us a cordial welcome, and, what was almost as good in our condition, some hot tea. All that I wanted was a bed, but aunty would not suffer us to retire till we had taken a warm bath and a violent currying from head to foot. O that bed ! so soft, so easy, so warm and dry ! Was there ever another like it ? I was asleep in three minutes, and have only just waked up. They tell me that it is afternoon, but I can hardly tell whether they mean to-day or to-morrow.

“ Cousin Charles is going to the post-office—it is three miles off, and having four houses in its immediate vicinity is considered to be located in *the* village. I shall write only once more before we return home—I shall not have time. Cousin

Charles already presumes to call me Fairy. I am afraid he is a scholar like you, for he has a large library and looks wise occasionally. Tell grandma that we have n't taken cold at all. A dozen kisses for dear Nellie. Let me have a long, *long* letter in reply to these."

Lila writes thus in her next letter :

"I am sure, Gerald, that if you knew how fully our time is taken up you would not blame me for waiting till my return before I give you a definite history of our doings. You complain that I have 'forgotten Rosedale,' which you know it would be impossible for me to do, and you darkly, and a little ill-humoredly, insinuate that you are of course forgotten now that I am taken captive by the superior attractions of a stranger. If you mean personal attractions, cousin Charles is nearly as handsome as myself. He has a very rosy complexion ; his nose and forehead being as pink as his cheeks. His hair is nearly snow white ; his luxuriant whiskers are of the same unpretending color, and, with the aforesaid locks, surround his face like a circle around the moon. As an offset to all this comfort, I must tell you that he is so noble, so good-natured and obliging, so witty and agreeable in conversation, so ready to attend us on any excursion, that we are disposed to think our former ideas of beauty wholly at fault, and to establish him as our beau-ideal of manly grace for the future.

"It seems that all Ohio is interested in our visit, and engaged in doing the honors of the State to us. Every body has relatives in New England, and you would suppose that aunt Ruth was acquainted with them all. She is sure to think of some well-remembered uncle Jonah as a common ground on which to meet. The genealogies searched out and set in order by them must count as far back as Noah, if not to Adam. Mention the least morsel of a baby, and they have all 'hearn tell' of its remotest ancestors.

"We are invited out among the neighbors every day and—

Ohio is invited to meet us. The neighbors live two or three miles apart ; some of them in log-houses.

"Isabel has made a sketch of a log-house that struck my fancy. We were returning from a long ride on horseback, and Charles and Isabel were lagging behind—they have a habit of doing so lately—when just at sunset I came into a snug little clearing in the woods, in the midst of which stood a log-house. It was half covered with vines, and, for a wonder, had two small, glass windows. I was tired of riding, and heartily weary of the round of visiting among so many strangers. I felt homesick too, and I knew the cabin was a home. Its retired situation strongly reminded me of our Summer-house, only Nellie's bright curls were no where to be seen, and there was no rapt student moping over a book in the door-way.

"O, Gerald ! do you know how *very* lovely our Rosedale is ; with its beautiful walks and fair encircling hills ; with its little noisy brook to sing us to sleep at night ?

"But the log-house. It was shut in by the grandest trees I ever saw. We have none at home that can compare with them for size. They had been lightly touched with frost and were very brilliant in the sunset. The cabin was so small that I fancied it the abode of some solitary man, and in my pity for his loneliness was busy in contriving some way to accommodate a companion for him in his birdsnest, when the door opened and out bounced six or seven bare-headed urchins, with dirty faces, and such great shocks of hair that they appeared to be top-heavy. A coarse-looking woman followed them to the door with a crying baby in her arms. I sat still on my horse and looked on, but my bit of romance took to itself wings and flew away. Such a variety of trowsers—or rather trowsers' legs, for no two matched—my eyes had never beheld. They sprung—the youngers, not the trowsers—up the trees, and swinging from branch to branch, were down again in a moment, and turning heels over head on the green by the door, like so many monkeys.

"Presently my tardy companions came up with long faces,

talking of the tiresome ride they had taken in search of me, and protesting that they would go out by themselves in future. Of course, I knew that they would be delighted to do so. We waited while Isabel made the sketch.

"You ask if the prairies are as beautiful as our hills, and tell me, on purpose to aggravate me, of the Autumn glories of the Chestnut Mountain. I have nothing to say of the prairies, except that they must be magnificent when on fire. They tell me that I have n't seen a great prairie yet, and that they are all less beautiful at this season, but they do not deny that a great prairie is like a smaller one, only more so.

"Now, good-by till we meet. We shall leave here on Monday, and aunt Ruth—to avoid your adieus I suspect—will not come with me to Rosedale, but will go directly to New York, and thence home. We are all well, and Isabel—whether benefited by the journey or by the attentions of cousin Charles—has improved greatly. I am not sure that I did not hear him promise to visit the East in the course of the next Spring or Summer. Whatever he said, it painted la Belle's cheeks beautifully. Adieu. LILA."

CHAPTER XIX.

"O, snatched away in beauty's bloom,
On thee shall press no ponderous tomb;
But on thy turf shall roses rear
Their leaves, the earliest of the year."

A DARK cloud had settled upon Rosedale during the absence of the travelers. Sickness—the fatal typhus fever—had entered, and bright, beautiful Nellie lay, delirious and restless, upon what was soon to be the couch of death. Isabel, too, was hurried immediately away to New York to watch by the bedside of her only remaining parent, who had been stricken down during her absence by the same fearful disease.

Very mournful was Lila's return. The sun shone brightly upon the familiar scenery, but before reaching the house she felt, almost intuitively, that sorrow awaited her there. She tried to account for her unusual depression of spirits, by attributing it to the intense excitement that she felt on reaching home. "She was nervous," she said, "but the welcome that awaited her would cure her in a moment."

When grandma Clare met her at the door and took her so affectionately into her warm embrace, Lila did not mistake her bitter tears of grief for tokens of joyous welcome.

"What is it, grandma? O, what is it? It turns my blood cold to see you! What dreadful thing has happened?"

Mrs. Clare could not speak; she moved her lips, but not a word could Lila distinguish. The poor child's face grew perfectly white and colorless.

"O, speak to me, dear grandma! Where are Gerald and Nellie? Where is grandpa? O, what has come to you?"

Still getting no reply beyond tears and choking sobs, Lila broke from her grasp and ran breathlessly up stairs to Nellie's chamber. The room was darkened, and it was some moments before her frightened eyes became accustomed to its obscurity. The first object that she clearly discerned was the motionless form of Nellie upon the bed, which had been moved to the center of the apartment. A group of silent persons, among whom she recognized their nearest neighbors, were standing near, and Gerald kneeled by the bed with his face hidden in the pillow that supported his sister's head.

That head had been shorn of its beautiful curls, and the sweet face was, alas, how altered! Her eyes were open and fixed in a steady expressionless gaze that nothing diverted. Dear, patient, lamb-like Nellie was dying. She had lain thus for three hours, apparently free from pain and insensible.

Lila knew that it was death, and that the radiant smiles and expressive gestures that she had loved to anticipate as a part of her welcome home were never to be hers. But she thought less of her own sorrow than of the grief that was wringing the hearts of the brother and aged grandparents.

Farmer Clare sat at the foot of the bed. His arms were folded stoutly upon his breast, and his form was as upright and firm as ever, but his features wore a look of anguish, almost of despair. He never moved his eyes from the face of the dying girl. No one noticed Lila's entrance, or if they did, no one spoke to her. She stole noiselessly to the old man's side, and put her arms around his neck. He started. A thrill of surprise and pleasure passed over his face as he clasped her—now weeping audibly—to his bosom.

"Thank God, Fairy," he whispered, "that you are returned!"

Just then Nellie stirred. They all came close to the bed, for they felt instinctively that her hour had come. For

a moment the light came back to the soft, blue eyes, and the wonted smile to her lips. The poor, thin fingers spelled out their last words, "Mamma, mamma!" and then, stretching her arms upward, like a weary babe to its mother, she ceased to breathe. It was all over. Her gentle tongue was loosed to speak the language of angels, and her ear, no longer deaf, drank in the harmonies of heaven. O, glorious, happy change for her! But the mourners wept inconsolably around the fair dead body. Gerald, exhausted with grief and watching, fainted quite away, and was carried insensible to his own room. He was himself very ill, but had struggled for days against the fierce pain and overpowering lassitude that alternately attacked him. The same malignant fever, that had now proved fatal to his sister, was burning in his veins; and it was many, many days after her death ere his almost distracted friends dared to hope for his recovery.

Nellie was buried, quietly and unpretendingly, in a little shady spot not far from the house, where her favorite blue violets would come earliest in the Spring-time and unfold their delicate buds upon her grave. She was never to be forgotten. The old house garnered in every room the sweet mementos she had left behind. Her fanciful embroidery covered the footstools, and her beautiful drawings hung like pictures of fresh life on the ancient walls.

The old man turned in his heavy sorrow to Lila; the resolute old grandmother unconsciously looked to her for strength and encouragement. In the evil that had come, and in their dread of the greater evil now threatening them, they clung to the orphan girl as the sole prop of their old age. Even Dr. Hamilton, who, by Mr. Lewis's desire, attended on Gerald, came to her with all his directions, and gave her, without questioning her ability, the sole charge of the sick-room.

Gerald had never seemed to know that she had returned. He called her Nellie; and in the silent finger language of the mutes, would speak of Lila's long delay, and of the

joyful time in store for them when she came back. In his delirium he never wondered when she spoke soothingly to him. And when he was at the worst, and his life in great danger, he would not suffer her to leave the room. When her absolute need of rest made it necessary for her to leave him, he moaned uneasily till she returned. At such times he would ask continually for Nellie, sister Nellie, till it was necessary to recall Lila to quiet him.

At last came the crisis of his disease, and the physician staid all night by his bedside. He seemed more restless than he had yet been during his illness, and often complained of being weary.

"O, if you would but let me go home," he would say, looking imploringly up into the doctor's face—"home, where there is rest."

"I never knew a person to get well," said one of the neighboring women, who had come to assist in taking care of him, "who begged in that way to go home. You may depend on it, Miss Lila, there's no hope."

"Pooh! Nonsense!" said Dr. Hamilton, who had overheard the whispered remark. "I know of a great many persons living now, who, when ill and delirious, talked in the same manner. It is nothing alarming. If he could only be soothed to sleep I should have great hopes of him. His restlessness is fast wasting his strength."

The incredulous looks of the woman seemed to irritate the good doctor.

"Let me give you a bit of advice, madam. Never croak in a sick-room. Ominous looks and words are out of place there, if any where. They can't do any good, and they often play the devil with both nurses and patients. Never portray shadows when it is just as easy to depict sunbeams; and you will live longer yourself, besides being much more—more universally admired," said the doctor, who seemed at a loss how to finish up his sentence.

"Do you think that music would quiet him?" asked Lila, timidly.

"Music! In this sick-room!" exclaimed the woman, in amazement.

"Music!" repeated the doctor; "is he fond of it when he is well?"

"Uncommonly so! At least," she added, "he was very fond of hearing *me* sing."

"Well, you can try it. It can do no harm, and it may divert his attention from himself. I will go below while you are singing"—he had observed her diffidence—"and you, ma'am," turning to the woman, "had better go to bed. There is no need of so many nurses. Sing your best, Miss Lila, it may save his life."

Lila's voice trembled as it rose sweetly in that chamber of sickness. She sang the old, familiar songs that had been his favorites when he was well; the songs that he used to ask for when the gray shades of the Summer evening were creeping silently over the earth.

By degrees he became still, and although an expression of pain often clouded his features, he seemed at last to listen with attention. The sacred melodies—doubly sacred as having been the delight of her dead mother—fell with a blessed, tranquilizing influence upon his ear, dispelling the vague, delirious imaginings that had so wearied him. She was ready to drop down with fatigue, but her voice did not falter for a moment, for he was lying quietly attentive now, although apparently with no inclination to sleep. She became discouraged at last, and was on the point of giving up in despair, when she observed his eyes gently close. He was asleep, peacefully asleep, and yet she could hardly persuade herself that a change for the better had taken place. She saw the crimson fever-flush disappear from his cheek, and a deathlike paleness succeed. She thought it was death, and could scarcely repress the cry of horror which rose to her lips. She leaned over him and held her breath, the better to distinguish his. It was so gently drawn as to be hardly perceptible. Trembling and frightened, she was about to summon Dr. Hamilton, when he came in with

Mrs. Clare and stood by her side. She dared not raise her eyes lest his looks should confirm her fears.

She stood hopelessly by while he lightly touched the now cool forehead of his patient, and counted the almost natural pulsations of his wrist.

Dr. Hamilton understood her feelings, and comprehended the horror-stricken gaze that seemed glued to poor Gerald's colorless face. As he watched her he observed, for the first time, her own wan and fragile appearance, and the traces of the sorrow and fatigue that she had borne. She had been so quiet and handy in her attendance in the sick-room, that he had never before thought of the possibility of her being overtasked.

But with all his observation of her, he did not appreciate the strength of her character, for he thought it would not do to communicate to her *there* the favorable change that had taken place in the invalid.

So motioning to Mrs. Clare, who was weeping tears of joy, to watch by the bedside, he led Lila gently, but resolutely, down to the parlor below.

Farmer Clare sat by the table; he had been reading, and his head was leaning on the Holy Bible, in which he had been seeking for words of consolation. He had been thinking of Nellie, whose light form and beautiful face would gladden him no more on earth, and of Gerald lying so dangerously ill, apparently near to his last resting-place by his fair sister's side, and the old man's stout, athletic frame shook with strong emotion. How bitterly now he regretted having thwarted the boy's noble ambition to become a scholar! He felt as though he could never forgive himself for having so darkened by his pride and obstinacy that young, fresh life. In the anguish of his spirit he groaned aloud. O, could it be that the light of his dwelling was to be thus quenched? He raised himself slowly, heavily, as Lila and the doctor entered.

"Mr. Clare," said Dr. Hamilton, cheerfully—so cheerfully that both Lila and the old man looked up in surprise;

his smile of pleasure thrilled the child's whole frame, and inspired a blissful hope that she had not once dared to whisper to herself since the day of her return—"Mr. Clare, I have come down with good news for you. Your grandson is at last sleeping quietly. His skin is cool and moist, and his pulse nearly as regular as your own. With careful nursing, which I know he will have, I anticipate a speedy recovery for him."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Lila, fervently. "O, grandpa, we shall be very happy yet!"

A rich color, almost like the bloom of health, suffused her cheek, and the light in her eyes made her whole appearance change as she nestled lovingly close to the old man's side. He rose slowly from his chair and gazed steadily, but with a dreamy, bewildered expression in the doctor's face. His voice trembled—not with age, but with emotion—as he spoke.

"You would not speak so encouragingly if there were not strong grounds for hope?"

"Not for the world. Of what avail would it be? I think the dreaded crisis is already past and he is out of danger. The pallor that so frightened you, little one," he added, turning to Lila, "was only the absence of fever. Of course he is wasted a good deal, as we shall now perceive, but he will soon regain his strength and flesh too. There is no occasion for further anxiety, but he will need—what he already has—the best of little nurses to take care of him."

"But who will tell him of Nellie? O, sir," said Lila, now for the first time giving way to tears, "he has forgotten that she is dead! The loss will kill him."

"No, it won't. Now do n't fret or you will be sick yourself. You are not far from it now. He will mourn for her, I dare say. It would be strange if he did n't. Now, Miss Lila, you are to try and get some rest. I shall stay by him, and, if any thing is needed that I can not get, I'll call up that dismal-faced watcher."

She hesitated. "Go to bed! go to bed, I tell you. I've

got a note for you somewhere, but you won't get it till you have had some sleep."

"From Isabel, sir?"

"How should I know? I have n't opened it."

"But if you would please to let me have it to-night I will go to bed as soon as I have read it."

"Will you; really, truly? Well, here it is, and mind that you sleep in the morning till I send some one to wake you."

He held the door open for her, evidently regarding her with much interest. Presently returning, "Mr. Clare," said he abruptly, "do you know what a treasure you have in that girl?"

"Do you mean Lila?"

"I mean the young girl who has just left us. Are you sensible of her worth? I have seen her much over-tasked when I have been here. She is not a common child."

"Doctor," replied the old man, warmly, "never was child or grandchild dearer to me than that orphan girl. I have feared that she would be the idol of us all, so tenderly have we all loved her. If she has over-exerted herself—and I fear that she has—it is not because the constant watching or hard labor has been required of her, but because of her love and devotion to us. My old wife, and I too, have been too selfishly absorbed in our grief to notice her fatigue. Thank you, doctor, for reminding me, and also for your attention to my poor boy. Under God, he owes his life to you."

"No such thing. He owes this blessed sleep, and consequently his life, to her. By Jove!" said the doctor, "~~she~~ sung him to sleep like an angel. All the medicine in the world could n't have accomplished it. I was in the next room. It operated like a charm; and no wonder; I never heard so sweet a voice in my life. Lewis half raves about a little nightingale that he has picked up somewhere. I'd like to hear her sing by the side of this one. Why, her singing is divine, sir."

The doctor paced rapidly up and down the room while he

was speaking, occasionally looking briskly round as if to defy any one to dispute what he was saying.

"Yes," said the old man, brightening up in his love and pride in her, "she is our singing-bird. We call her Fairy on that account partly, for there really seems to be a sort of magic in her voice. You should have heard her sing when we were all so happy, sir. And yet, we often fear"—and his voice became quite womanly in its tenderness—"we fear that she is not long for this world. You see how slender she is, and how crooked she is growing."

"Yes; I have observed it."

"Perhaps," said the farmer, anxiously, "she is hopelessly deformed already?"

"Not so bad as that, I hope. We must talk about it to-morrow. I must be off at ten o'clock. My city patients complain of me, but none of them are in immediate danger, while your boy has had but one chance for his life." He looked at his watch. "There are yet three hours before dawn—let me prescribe for you and your good wife. Take as much untroubled sleep as can be got out of so short a time. I will send her down. Good-night."

Late as it was, the aged couple did not retire to rest till they had offered earnest thanksgivings to the compassionate God who was dealing so mercifully with them.

When Lila reached her chamber, and for the first time since her return sat down quietly by her table, she could hardly realize that she might lie down and sleep tranquilly, or that her burden of sorrow had been so greatly lightened. She broke the seal of her note like one in a dream. It was, as she had supposed, from Isabel. Occupied with her grief and care, she had scarcely yet missed her friend, and several of the short notes that she had received from her had been read so absently and hurriedly by Gerald's side, that she seemed to have received no idea of their contents, except that Mr. Lee was slowly recovering, and that his daughter was anxious to be in the country again. Now she read more attentively. The sisterly sympathy expressed by her friend was

like balm to her excited feelings; and yet, as she read on, the old expression of grief and dread came again across her features, and cheek and lip were colorless as she raised her imploring eyes to Heaven.

"Do not mourn too sadly," wrote Isabel, "for our sweet Nellie. She was not formed to struggle with the cares and sorrows of life. It is through his love for her that our kind Heavenly Father has so early called her home. She has been taken from a cold, dark world, but how rapidly, dear Lila, will her gentle spirit expand in the congenial atmosphere of heaven! Such a death has no terrors. She is safely over the dark river that we are yet to cross. She has reached home a little before us. I feel very desirous that Gerald should recover, for I fear that he has not yet obtained a hope in the merits of our Savior. I trust that God will hear our prayers and spare him for this. I am sorry to tell you, because I know it will so grieve you, that my health is again declining. A severe cold, taken soon after my return, added to the care and anxiety that I have endured, has reproduced all the old threatening symptoms. Do not be alarmed—do not be sorry for me. I am so weary that I long for the unbroken rest of the grave. Let me serve as another link in the chain that attracts you toward heaven. I shall return to aunt Thorpe's as soon as such a journey is practicable. I am better there than here. My serious illness is a restraint upon my step-mother, who is fond of gay and fashionable society. My father's protracted sickness has much annoyed her. He is nearly well now, and is desirous that I should come back to you as soon as possible; not from want of affection, you will believe, for he will spend with me all the time that he can spare from his business. Do not be shocked if I am changed. I hope to see you next week. Mr. Lewis called on me this morning. He is very anxious about Gerald, and shed tears when speaking of Nellie. You would have seen him at Rosedale ere this, but he has been detained at home by the illness of Mrs. Lewis. If

she suffers no relapse, he proposes to be my traveling companion next week. The season here has been unusually sickly. Many a social circle has been thinned, and many a hearth made desolate. While we were so free from care and so happy in our visit to the West, the destroyer was busily at work among the friends that we had left behind. Several of my acquaintances died during our absence, and others have since fallen. I used to think Autumn so beautiful, but it seems to me now that the poets may well designate it as 'the melancholy time,' the 'saddest of the year.' Good-by till we meet. God bless and keep you! ISABEL."

This note had evidently been written with some difficulty, a sentence at a time. The handwriting betrayed the debility of the writer.

Lila felt as if all that she had ever loved was being removed from the earth, and for a moment she longed to lie down and die too. But she thought of Gerald's sorrow and loneliness when the knowledge of his great loss should return to his mind—she thought of the old people so much broken down by their grief, so different from the resolute couple of a few months ago—of their dejection and occasional childishness—of all their parental kindness to her, and of the feebleness of their old age, till life, imbittered as it might be by affliction, seemed glorious in its never-failing opportunities of doing good.

CHAPTER XX.

"Speak kindly to the erring ;
For is it not enough
That innocence and peace are gone,
Without thy censure rough ?
It surely is a weary lot
That sin-crushed heart to bear ;
And they who share a happier fate
Their chidings well may spare."

THE hours of the night fled swiftly away. Never weary for a moment, never pausing for the briefest second of time, but on, on unweariedly.

While sleep wraps in balmy unconsciousness the tired-out world, the hours do not wait till it awakes refreshed ; but hurrying ever, in the darkness as well as in the mellow light, their course is on, on, forever on !

With the first gray dawning of light Gerald awoke. He was perfectly rational. The doctor was dozing in a large arm-chair by the bedside, as oblivious, apparently, of care or trouble as if he had not a patient in the world. There was not a sound to be heard save the loud and measured ticking of the kitchen clock, and the crowing of the early-rising roosters in the barn-yard. He lay still and silent for some time, endeavoring to comprehend his situation. A sense of something dreadful having occurred, or being about to occur, oppressed him ; he had a vague idea of some irreparable loss—of something being taken from his life that had brightened it. As when a fearful dream or a nightmare takes possession of the faculties, the horror that overpowered him was so indefinite, so undefinable, that his better judgment had no power to grapple with it.

At first he had no thought of being ill, and wondered at the strange man now snoring loudly by his side. Who was he? And why was he there? A glance at the table covered with phials of medicine and other appurtenances of a sick-room, in the midst of which was a lamp feebly contending with the growing light of day, suggested the idea of sickness; but it was not till he attempted to sit up and found himself helpless, that he comprehended who was the invalid.

By this time he was quite weary with thinking, so, after another wondering look at the unconscious doctor, he again fell asleep.

When he again awoke he felt easier and lighter-hearted. His grandmother was bending over him. He smiled in his old, bright, natural manner as he recognized her.

"What a long, long night it has been, grandma! Did you come to wake me? I will get up directly."

"No, no indeed! You must lie quiet," said the old lady, quickly. "You have been very sick, Gerald—sick a long time. Thank God that you are better! There, you must n't talk, the doctor has forbidden it."

"Where is Nellie, grandma? Let her sit here and I will not speak a word. Has Lila returned?"

"Lila is talking with Dr. Hamilton in the sitting-room. She will come in directly, but you must not talk to her. I shall forbid her answering if you do. We must nurse you well again as soon as possible, and then you may talk night and day if you like. Now go to sleep again, like a good boy, while I prepare some refreshment for you."

Left alone, Gerald lay silently thinking. At first nothing seemed clear to him. Why did not Nellie hasten to his side? Could it be that the agonizing death-bed scene which had so haunted and oppressed his mind at intervals during his illness, was not a dream, an illusion of his brain? It came back distinctly now—the long hours of anguish by his sister's couch, when death and life were struggling for the mastery, and hope at last died as the early doom of the fair

girl became manifest. He dimly understood that his illness was in some way connected with hers. Yet he hoped against hope and eagerly watched the door in momentary expectation of seeing the sweet, affectionate face with its profusion of golden curls. How he longed for the coming of Lila, who, he seemed to think, would know how to dissipate the gloomy thoughts that—as memories of the past—continually crowded into his mind!

She came in at last with Dr. Hamilton. He could not ask what he desired while he was by, so he contented himself with signifying to Lila his joy at her return.

Dr. Hamilton bustled about, arranging medicines and giving directions, now speaking hopefully to his patient, then cracking some sly joke at the expense of Lila, who he said was now to be physician as well as nurse for a few days, promising that if she acquitted herself to his satisfaction, to recommend her as an efficient assistant to the superintendent of some hospital.

“And you will please be resolute as well as kind, Miss Lila, and pay no attention to his wishes if they conflict with my orders. You are to starve him first of all. This is essential in order to prevent one of two evils—a relapse or a famine.”

His hearty laugh echoed cheerfully through the room, and when, at the appointed hour, he took himself away all the genial sunshine appeared to depart with him; and it was with a sad and fluttering heart that Lila, after contriving every possible delay, at Gerald's request sat down by his side.

“Lila dear, where is Nellie?”

She had seen the question in his face many times since entering the room, and had feared the effect of her reply. She hesitated and trembled.

“Lila, tell me,” he implored, “where is Nellie?”

She saw that he suspected the truth, but she tried in vain to speak; her faltering voice refused to confirm his fears, but she pointed expressively upward. He turned away his

face with a bitter groan, and feebly drew the bed-clothes over his head. He had no strength to exhibit violent grief, but his low moans of sorrow were inexpressibly touching.

"O, Gerald, dear Gerald !" said Lila, at last finding voice to comfort him, "do not grieve so sadly. It is better for her, indeed it is. She is united now to your dear mother in heaven. What a happy meeting it must have been ! Think of her as she is, a happy angel now—perhaps commissioned as a ministering spirit to her dear brother, by the good, eternal Father !"

Her voice became clear and steady as she went on.

"I love to think of her in her happy, beautiful home among the blessed. So free from sin and sorrow, Gerald, never to be unhappy again—never more to feel pain and anxiety—but always to enjoy the society of the pure and holy ! O, Gerald, is it not wrong to weep and lament when those who love the Savior, as dear Nellie did, go to be forever with him ?"

He did not answer, but she thought his sobs less frequent.

"When you are strong enough, dear Gerald, we will go to her grave together. In the Spring we will plant roses about it to blossom in the Summer-time. Thinking of her and speaking of her we shall be more likely to imitate her patient goodness, and so become better fitted to go to her when our time shall come."

Still he did not answer ; he only clasped the little hand busy in smoothing his pillows.

"We shall miss her," continued Lila—"we shall miss her every-where. For it seems to me that nothing now remains on earth so sweet and beautiful. But we shall think of her as being ever rejoicing, as being always happy, and so we shall make the old house cheerful again, and bring comfort to grandma and grandpa, who are almost broken-hearted, shall we not, Gerald ?"

He looked up gratefully.

"You lighten my sorrow so much by sharing it."

"And I am to be your nurse, Gerald. I am to talk and

laugh and be as entertaining as possible, and when you are weary lull you to sleep with music, as I did last night when you were so wild and restless. In a few days, when you are stronger, we will bring down those dull, prosy books in the garret, and I shall read aloud to you till I am so wise that my head will be quite heavy."

He now returned her smile, and Mrs. Clare entering with a basin of warm gruel, forbade all further conversation. He soon dropped placidly to sleep again, still retaining Lila's hand in his, as if it were something to cling to for safety, or something to trust to for affection. He recovered very slowly. He often seemed to lose in one day all the strength that he had gained for a week previous. He mourned deeply for his fair twin sister. All Lila's affectionate skill, or the loving attentions of his grandparents, did not always succeed in chasing the gloom from his countenance. When he was able to go down stairs, Mrs. Clare suggested to Lila the propriety of putting out of sight all that could remind him of the lost one, but Lila felt, intuitively, that he would like best to find the little tokens of her love and skill in the accustomed nooks where her hand had placed them. So nothing was changed. The result proved that she was right, for nothing seemed to afford him so much pleasure as passing from one to another of the simple sketches of familiar places that hung upon the walls, and inspecting the portfolio of drawings upon which she had last been engaged.

During all this season of affliction the neighboring families had been unremitting in their kindly offices, but among them all no one had been so tireless in his attentions as Zeno Bradford, who was now about to leave home to attend a distant school. Not a day had passed without bringing him to Rosedale, and several times he had watched all night by Gerald's side, learning from love and gratitude alone the art of gentle nursing. When the old farmer, after Nellie's death, became for a time careless of his business and negligent of all his interests, it was Zeno who kept every thing

in order about the farm. If any thing was to be procured at the village store, he was always at hand to go or send for it. Yet he was so unobtrusive in all that he did, that no one at the time realized how greatly they were indebted to him. They felt the value of his devotion to them in their time of need; he was like one of the family in his sympathy. But when the old man at last, rallying his energies, began to look about him and to sigh over the ruined crops that he had in his grief neglected to gather in, how great was his surprise to find the plenteous harvest safely housed, and his barns and granaries overflowing with the Autumn sheaves!

During the last sad months there had been many changes; the very face of Nature seemed to wear a melancholy expression unusual to it, but no place and no thing had changed so much as Zeno. Since the picnic his home had been almost a happy one; a strange but good spirit had entered and assumed a supremacy there, and the mistaken parents and their long-abused son had at length learned to value each other.

Not that any real affinity could exist between the refined, sensitive lad and his coarse, gossiping mother, but her manner invariably softened whenever she addressed him, and it was such a relief to know that the humiliating epithets so long familiar to his ears were never to be applied to him again. It was so sweet to know that his father could turn to him for comfort when distressed by the reckless misconduct of his brother—the favorite son.

His little sister, Emma, came to him with the difficult lesson that puzzled her at school, and sat, as she had never done before, fondly upon his knee and called him brother. More than once had he observed his mother's look of admiration when, to spare his old father's eyes, he read the Holy Scriptures at the hour of family worship. The sense of being known and appreciated—perhaps beloved—effectually overcame the extreme diffidence that had made him *so awkward*, and his bashful blushes and clownish manners

were soon forgotten. As his intellect matured, and his acquaintance with literature advanced, his bearing insensibly assumed something of the polish and dignity of the great minds whose glowing pages were his chief delight. His countenance became more pleasing in its expression and his whole appearance more attractive. Not that he had grown handsome. The regular features, fine form, and clear complexion that constitute beauty were all lacking; but the stamp of intellect was on his brow, and the fire of genius lighted up his small, gray eyes.

If there was any human being more dear to him than all others it was the orphan Lila. He almost worshiped her as a divinity. He would have thought no hardship great if it could but be borne in her service. It was not the affection of a lover for the fair one of his choice, although, now in his twentieth year, he might begin to dream of bright eyes and rosy cheeks; but it was a trust in her, a loving confidence, like the reliance of an affectionate child upon an honored parent. Young as she was, his love for her partook of veneration, and she was his good angel, ever winning him onward to distinction and happiness. For years she had been the only one interested in his welfare. How could he help garnering in his memory the sweet, encouraging smiles and hopeful words with which she had always greeted him?

The snows of Winter were on the ground when Isabel came back. Her increasing debility during the bleak month of November had nearly destroyed all hope of her ever again being able to undertake so long a journey, when, by one of those unaccountable changes that so frequently delude the consumptive, she became so much better as to renew again the fond hopes of her friends that she would ultimately recover. Isabel knew very well the flattering nature of her disease; she had seen several of her young city associates slowly but surely made its victims, and she was aware that the respite from suffering so encouraging to her friends was in reality no evidence that her complaint was better, for still

the harassing cough continued and the hectic spot on her cheek became more apparent.

To Lila, when they met, she seemed no worse than when she returned to New York, and the affectionate girl shed tears of joy as she kissed again and again her friend's cheek. They had a great deal to tell each other; each had received a long and interesting letter from aunt Ruth, filled with glowing particulars of a glorious revival of religion that she had found in progress on her return to Boston. Isabel had received a somewhat lengthy epistle from cousin Charles, which, for some reason, she declined to show, but read aloud whatever it contained of general interest.

"In a day or two, dear Lila, we must resume our music."

"I fear I have forgotten all I knew. I have not practiced a note since I came home till last evening, when Gerald desired to hear me play. Grandpa prefers to hear me sing without the instrument."

"Is Gerald well enough to go out?"

"We have n't allowed him to venture out yet. Grandma is so anxious that she is afraid to have him take the cold air. I am confident he would gain strength faster if he went out. It is enough to make a well person ill to be shut up so closely. Gerald is as thin and peaked-faced as you are."

"Indeed! You have not forgotten how to compliment. I presume that both of us compare favorably with the Fairy, for she has lost flesh and color and her good spirits too, I fear. I shall propose to Gerald that we resign the invalid's chair to you."

"He would laugh at you, Isabel. Can you find nothing to help that terrible cough? You will never get well till that is cured. There are many things advertised in the papers that have cured thousands. You smile, as if it were an affair of small consequence."

"No, Lila. I was only amused at your sudden faith in quackery."

"But, surely," persisted Lila, "some of them must be

what they pretend. You can't believe that so many persons would tell lies. Some one among them must be honest."

"But how shall I ascertain? It would take a lifetime to try them all. Do not feel so anxious about me. I shall try whatever is proper, if only for your sake. But if the skill of the most experienced physicians fails to effect a cure, I am convinced that the humbug of quackery will avail nothing."

"There must be something that would help you, Isabel, if we could only find it."

Lila had risen to go, and, with her hand on the door-knob, was lingering to express her anxiety, when Mrs. Thorpe, who had been quietly sewing during their conversation, laid down her work and came forward.

"Wait a moment, Miss Lila. Your face expresses more uneasiness than our Isabel's case demands. You have cares enough at home to worry over without this anxiety on her account. She is much better than when she came here, and quiet and country air and a good sleigh ride occasionally will do wonders. You look, my dear, as if you needed all these as much as she does. Many people have coughs; it seems to be natural; her mother was always hacking and coughing as long ago as I can remember. Belle takes it from her. Why, my dear child, persons sometimes die at ninety-nine, of old age, who have had a worse cough than hers all their lives. It lengthens the lives of some people—at least our doctor says so." Isabel laughed cheerfully.

"You wouldn't look so dismal if you could see her eat. Speaking of eating, by the way, reminds me of what Mat Maroonney said this morning. You know he peddles meat for the butchers now. Said I, 'It seems to me, Mat, that the meat you bring to us has a great deal of bone in it.' 'O, then, ma'am,' said he, 'and who's to blame for that, shure? If the Lord had plazed to make the cattles to run about like snakes, without any bones at all, at all, its meself would be plazed, to be sure, for it's the same that's no easy to saw and chop to suit the old grannies.'"

Langhing at Mat's singular idea, Lila bade her friend good-by, and had got into the street to return home, when she was accosted by the veritable Mat himself, of whom they had been speaking.

"O, then, miss!" said he, running up out of breath, "it's luck to see you here. And would you plaze to go to ould Nannie Lee?"

"What is the matter? Is she worse?"

"O, then, I don't know. It's likely, indade! She's crosser and uglier altogether, an that's what you mane."

"O, Mat, how can you speak so? Old Nannie has been a wicked woman, I'm afraid, but we should pity her all the more for that. We do not always do right ourselves, Mat. She has been ill so long, that it is no wonder if she is fretful sometimes. You or I should be quite as irritable, I dare say. She lies there alone, with not a soul to speak to, and has not a relative in the world to be kind to her. Did she send you for me?"

"An' as to that, it's your grandam she was wanting, but ye'll do as well, ony day. For her thurst friends she'd bite shure, and niver a dacent thank ye. An she were dying not a ceevil word would she spake—unless, mayhaps, to the divil awaitin' her. O, then, miss, and she's plenty ould to die and lave throubling us! She'll niver lave tormentin' an honest lad like meself while the breath's in her, bad luck to her!"

"Why, Mat, she is nothing to you, surely. What can she do to *you*?" asked Lila.

"Do! Well, she can't do nothin', the botherin' ould crathur! Our lady be thanked, an' she's past that intirely!"

"But why are you so angry with her?" Lila smiled in spite of herself at the boy's wrathful face and droll grimaces. "Come, Mat, I will walk back with you. Tell me all about it."

"Well, miss, my misthress—the butcher's wife, ye mind—she pities ould Nan; an' it's me that she sends.

ivery blessed mornin', be it cowl'd or hot, with the broths, and the gruels, and the nice, hot stuffs to tarry her."

"To do what?" interrupted Lila.

"To tarry her!" repeated the lad, impatiently—"to kape her hiritic sowl from laving the world as soon as convanient. Do ye mind, now?"

"Yes, I understand. It is very kind of your mistress to think of her."

"Och, miss! Ye may spake thrue of her and say all that, indade; but divil a bit does ould Nan care for that same, let me tell ye. Whin fust her two homely eyes lights on me this mornin'—you should have been there indade—'Come along!' says she, 'you dirty, good-for-nothing fur-rinner—come along, you mane Irish spalpeen! Let's see what sort of a greasy mess ye've fetched now.' 'And whatever it be,' says I, 'it's good enough for ye, shure!' 'Howld your tongue, will ye,' says she, beginning to eat! 'No, indade,' says I. 'You freckled, snub-nosed Paddy!' says she. 'An' why can't ye die, ye shriveled ould maid,' says I, 'and lave the world in pace?' O, then, miss, could you have seen her, indade! whin she heaved the hot basin o' broth at me head! It raached clean past whin I dodged to one side, and it went—it went"—

Mat burst into a loud laugh at the remembrance.

"It went where, Mat?"

"It went—he! he! it went—O dear, I can't tell ye!" gasped the lad, almost choking with merriment.

"Well, Mat, it went where?" urged Lila, who had waited for him to catch his breath. "Now you can speak. It went"—

"Smack agin the doctor's face, into his neck and all over his clothes. Och! an' he was in luck to be comin' in time O, then, an' it bate a rooster fight, intirely! To see him blowing and snorting, and splutterin', and rakin' the gravy out of his hair! an' to see ould Nan stare! Ow me! I'm fit to die whin I think on't!"

Lila could n't help joining in his laugh. She had herself

often experienced Nannie's querulous ill-humor, and it had always been a great trial of her patience to go on an errand of charity to the old woman's miserable cottage. Most of the neighbors wholly neglected her. The well-founded reports of Nan's early life and misconduct had always been a barrier to any intimacy with her, and till she became helpless and was obliged to cease wandering and begging around the country, it was seldom that any foot, save her own, crossed her rude threshold. Even when she was first missed by the wayside, and at the doors of the surrounding houses, where she daily begged for food, no one took the trouble to inquire about her, till grandma Clare, fearing that she might die alone, sent Lila to ascertain her situation. Of late, as she grew weaker, the neighbors had called often, though few of them could bear patiently the unsparing abuse that she heaped upon them in return for their kindly offices.

During Mat's comical account of her, Lila had resolved to speak to him seriously about his evident want of consideration and respect toward the aged invalid, but in her amusement the lecture was forgotten.

They had now arrived at the old woman's door. The loud voice of old Nannie was plainly heard within. Lila hesitated.

"An ye're afraid, miss, I'll go in before ye," said Mat.

"No, the sight of you might vex her. You do n't know what she wanted of grandma, I suppose?"

"No, miss."

"Well, never mind ; I shall ascertain. Good-by, Mat."

"The same to yeself. Shall I wait and go home with ye?"

"No. I shall not be afraid. It will not be dark, there'll be moonlight and snowlight too."

There were a number of women in the house when Lila entered, for old Nannie was dying. She was sitting up in bed gazing wildly around the room. She had on neither cap or night-dress ; the old gown that she had worn for years was loosely wrapped about her shoulders, and her long, un-

even gray hair streamed in tangled masses about her face. All the persuasions of those present could not induce her to lie down.

An old green flannel bag that had hung for years at the head of the bed, now lay on the ragged quilt before her, and her skeleton fingers, already blue in death, clutched it convulsively. She recognized Lila as she approached the bed. Her eyes glared frightfully, and the child trembled with a fear that she could not understand.

"Come here!" she screamed; "come here! *They* say I'm dying. It's a lie! The fools beg me to lie down and die quietly. I tell you I won't! I an't ready to die, and I won't die! What's the use to argue about it?" she asked, turning fiercely to the frightened spectators; "have n't I told you my mind? Did you ever know old Nan Lee to yield against her will? Come nearer, little one. My eyes are blurred with something. I can't see you. Come nearer."

Lila timidly obeyed. The old woman held up the green bag.

"It's almost full," she whispered hoarsely; "almost full of silver and gold. You have been kind to me more than all others. Yours is the only human voice that does not jar upon my ear; and so you will be rich when I die. The will is made, and all will be yours; but not while I live, no, not while I live, and I shall live a long time yet. How dark it grows!"

Her haggard figure swayed backward and forward in its increasing weakness, and her head drooped suddenly—only for a moment, and the old fierce expression came back to her face as she raised it again.

"Have n't I said it? *I will not die*, I tell you! I will not leave my bright, beautiful gold. Ha! ha! the fools thought me poor! How they pinched and stinted themselves to give me bread! I saved my gold, so bright, so yellow, so beautiful! We'll not part yet, my treasure. No, no! The night—is dark, and—my old brain—is dizzy—but—to-morrow"—

The sentence was never finished. Grasping tighter the old bag, whose contents chinked and jingled, she sprang from the bed, and, crouching low upon the floor, with one prolonged groan, was dead.

Lila hurried into the street. It was evening, and the moon shone brightly upon the snow. The icicles glittered upon the trees and fringed the eaves of the houses, for the moderately-cool air of the day had assumed an icy temperature as the evening set in. There were merry sleigh-bells ringing in all directions, chiming pleasantly with the shouts of the village boys, who were coasting down the neighboring hills, and making the keen air vocal with gladness.

Lila was too much frightened to observe any thing of this. All her care for others, and all her own fatigue was forgotten. The extreme cold was unfelt as she trod fleetly homeward. She had never dreamed that such a death-scene as she had just witnessed could be possible. Death had come in its gentlest guise to release her mother from suffering, and when Nellie died there was nothing to repel—or disgust—in the approach of the last messenger. Once or twice she was nearly thrown down by the rapid sleighs that passed in quick succession, for in her bewildering horror she kept crossing and recrossing the slippery road. Several drivers, checking their horses a moment, called angrily to her to keep out of the road.

At last, just as she reached the lane, there came down the road a light cutter, drawn by a span of spirited horses. It seemed impossible to Lila to get out of the way. She stood in the middle of the road as if spell-bound. It was well for her that the gentleman who was driving saw her, and checked his horses in time to save her. There was room to pass her, but the gentleman stopped to speak to her.

"Do you not know, my child, that it is not safe to stand in the way, or to cross such slippery roads when the horses are near?"

"O, sir!" replied Lila, "I was too frightened to think."

"Why, bless me!" cried the familiar voice of Allan

Lewis, "it is Fairy! Out alone, and frightened, and half-frozen, too, are you not? Let me lift you into the sleigh, I am going to Rosedale. There, these fur robes will soon warm you. I wonder that the old lady let you go out alone and so thinly clad."

"Is—is it very cold, sir?"

"Cold? I think it is. Are you dreaming? How your teeth chatter! You tremble all over. Poor child, did the horses frighten you so?"

"No, sir, I did not think of them. I had just seen an old woman die—such a dreadful death!" said Lila, shuddering.

"Well, well, don't think of it now. It was no place for you. Try and forget it. How is Miss Lee?"

"Much better, sir, than when she left New York."

"Ah, that is cheering news! And Gerald?"

"He is improving slowly. We hardly perceive any change from day to day, but when we look back a week or so, and remember how he was then, we can see that he has gained a little."

"How are the old folks?"

"They are much altered since Nellie died, but are getting more and more cheerful. You will see that they are changed, that they are more forgetful and less resolute."

"If the old gentleman were a little less obstinate, too, it would n't injure him in the least," was Allan's thought, but he did not express it.

"And last, but not least, how is the Fairy herself? Dr. Hamilton has quite alarmed me about her."

"About me? I have been very well, sir, and except being easily fatigued am quite well now. What did Dr. Hamilton mean?"

"He meant just what he said, I presume, that your health was delicate, and that you over-tasked your strength. He came back to town in raptures about somebody's singing. He came in to see my wife the morning after his return. I see you are waiting to ask, so I may as well say at once

that Mrs. Lewis is quite well, I thank you. Well, I heard the doctor's voice down stairs, and was leaving the library to inquire about Gerald, when he met me at the door. 'Lewis,' said he, 'you may just make up your mind at once that the little nightingale you talk about can be beat. I would n't mind betting a hundred dollars that she can't hold a candle, in the way of singing, to a little country divinity that I have discovered.' I knew where he had been, Fairy, so I said, as innocently as possible, 'Well, doctor, if you'll produce a child of fourteen years who has a sweeter voice, or more musical genius, than my *protégé*, Lila Wood, I'll pay the hundred with pleasure.' You ought to have heard him laugh. 'Why, you unconscionable rogue,' said he, 'you have mentioned the very article of goods that I was going to produce.' Ah, here we are at old Rosedale once more! You are quite yourself again, are you not?"

"Yes, sir. I am not frightened unless I think how awful"—

"There, that is enough. Do not try to recall the scene that terrified you. Think of something else, or stop thinking altogether if you can not otherwise get rid of it."

They found Gerald and the old people full of anxiety at her prolonged absence. Farmer Clare was just going out to harness his horse to go in search of her. After warmly welcoming Mr. Lewis they asked at once why she had been detained.

"I had started for home, grandma," she replied, "when I met Irish Mat, who told me that old Nannie was worse and desired to see you immediately. I knew that you ought not to venture out this cold evening, so I went in your place. I staid longer than I intended, but I did n't think you would feel so anxious about me."

"It is all right, Fairy," said the farmer. "Gerald would insist that you were freezing to death in some by-place, but here you are, safe and sound, only looking a bit too pale. How did you leave the old woman?"

"She died while I was there. O, grandma, it was a shocking sight! It will haunt me forever!"

"Come here, Lila," said Mr. Lewis, abruptly, "I want to question you about your music. Are you progressing?"

"I am going to begin anew in a day or two, when Isabel is stronger."

"And how is it, Gerald, about the studies? You are not well enough, I suspect, to do more than read, are you?"

"I study a little," he replied. "One hour in the day is all that my nurse allows."

"Indeed! A wise Fairy! What are you reading now?"

"Butler's Analogy."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, sir, very much."

"Does Lila read it with you?"

"No, sir," said Gerald, laughing; "she says it is so dry that it is brittle."

"Not so interesting, Lila, as Scott's poetry or Campbell's?"

"No, sir, or Burns, or Moore, or Goldsmith."

"Are there no American poets that you like?"

"None that I like so well, I think; though I have read scarcely any American poetry, and so ought not to express a preference. Gerald likes Milton, and Cowper, and Young, and says that when my judgment is mature—like his, I suppose—I shall agree with him."

"Why, Lila, do you not like Milton?"

"Yes; especially the *Paradise Lost*. But I get tired of Cowper and of several others that Gerald fancies, and Young seems to me so dull and heavy—heavy as lead; and Gerald will not let me see Lord Byron, he has locked him in a drawer till I am older."

"Till you are stronger and less imaginative, I said, sister," remarked Gerald.

"Mr. Lewis, is he not cruel?"

"I think not. Will you listen to a little sober advice from me? Throw aside wholly, for a few years, all merely-imaginative literature. Your imagination requires no stimulus, but constant curbing. Pursue a course of good, solid reading, allowing Gerald to select your books, and I will answer for it that you will be both happier and healthier. Even should you then resume your present habit of reading only what is agreeable to you, you will be astonished to perceive how much your taste has improved and altered. Can you make the sacrifice?"

"Yes, sir; easily. I am not so wholly governed by fancy as you and Gerald suppose. I will begin one of his hum-drum volumes to-morrow."

Mr. Lewis remained all night at Rosedale. In the morning grandma showed him Nellie's last drawings, the half-finished wax flowers, and the simple diary of her thoughts and occupations that the dear child had kept for the last year of her life. Lila could not yet think with composure of old Nannie's death, and heard with a feeling bordering on terror that the gold and silver so long worshiped by the old woman was really to be hers.

"I shall never use it, grandpa," she said, "I would not touch a penny of it on any consideration whatever. It seems as though a curse must accompany it. Think how it was obtained! How many awful lies have been told to extort it piecemeal from others poorer than herself!"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Lewis, "a good Providence has directed it to your keeping, so that it may at last be used for the good of mankind. It is nothing against the gold itself that she so perverted its use."

"It is quite a fortune, Lila," said the farmer.

"I do n't care what it is. Grandpa, will you not take it and use it for the good of some one, no matter who, so that I shall never hear of it again? Let it make *your* old age easier."

Mr. Lewis spoke a few words in a low tone to the old man, who nodded his head approvingly.

“Well, Fairy, if you feel so, I’ll take charge of it. I an’t afraid of old Nan’s haunting me.”

Without Lila’s knowledge it was placed at interest in her name, and, occupied with other matters, she soon ceased to think of its former owner.

CHAPTER XXI.

"She's modest as ony, an' blythe as she's bonny,
For guileless simplicity marks her its ain."

Time has dealt kindly with our friends, the Corys. Neither William nor Mary look a week older than when we first knew them. During the five years that they have spent in their pleasant home, they have known no great sorrow. Providence has smiled upon them, and repaid more than fourfold the simple, but willing charities of poorer days.

More dear than ever to Jamie—now a stout boy of seventeen, who has a garden and green-house of his own, and sells the produce—is the golden tress of hair so long ago stolen. As a great treat, he sometimes shows it to Ally, and tells her in the evening twilight of the beautiful child who could not speak; who could not ask for cake, or apples, or candy, as the aforesaid Ally is always doing; who could not listen—like the same little girl—to mamma's singing at night; who was always as gentle and patient as she was beautiful, and never guilty of the thousand mischievous tricks that little Ally—for a moment conscience-stricken—admits having committed.

There is a baby brother in the same cradle in which Nellie once loved to rock the little girl, and Ally repeats to him all that James has been saying; and inadvertently bringing her rosy face too near to his, immediately forfeits as much of her "bonnie brown hair" as baby's fingers can grasp. Sitting in the foot of the cradle to rock it, she softly sings her favorite verse. It has only two lines, and is a prayer—

"Very little things are we,
Make us what we ought to be."

Mary is as industrious as ever. The bright needles in her basket get no opportunity to rest. When William remonstrates, and says that since the slop-work was banished she is busier than ever, she invariably replies :

“How can it be otherwise, when you are bringing home every day in the year some poor, ragged rascal to be fed and clothed !”

And then she holds up the warm garment that she is making and says, “How comfortable will old Mrs. Price be, or old black Jacob, when this is finished !”

Then observing her husband’s quiet smile and evident satisfaction, she adds quickly, “Only, William, I must insist on one thing. Do n’t, for mercy’s sake, hunt up any more cases of the same sort !”

William and James always spend their evenings at home. They know nothing about the various clubs and noisy caucuses—political or otherwise—to which so many resort to get rid of themselves. Home is their earthly paradise ; the pure domestic virtues cluster thickly about their fireside, and they are never without rich sources of enjoyment.

They take turns in reading aloud, and Ally sits up for an hour to listen. The toils of the day are forgotten while with Bruce they penetrate to the sources of the Nile, or approach with Stephens *almost* to the populous and civilized city, which stands by itself undiscovered and unknown. Of its existence they entertain no more doubt than the distinguished traveler himself.

More than once have they voyaged with the adventurous Cook around the world, and in company with travelers of undoubted veracity have visited almost every mission station on the globe. They are fond, too, of religious literature, and the Dairyman’s Daughter and Pilgrim’s Progress are read so often, especially the latter, that little Ally, perfectly captivated with its descriptions of the Interpreter’s house and the palace “Beautiful,” resolves—as so many other children have done—to steal away some day, when mamma is busy, and look for the wicket-gate hat stands at

the beginning of the straight road leading to the Celestial City.

The volume is adorned with many cuts, illustrative of the pleasures and trials incident to the way, and the child's cheek blanches a little at the terrible appearance of Apollyon in his fight with Christian, and she mentally resolves to secure the services of Greatheart at the Interpreter's house. She confides all this secretly to Harry Lewis, as they look over the pictures together. He pronounces it a brave plan, and agrees to accompany her, but proposes before starting to procure a hurdy-gurdy for himself and a tamborine for the little girl.

"You see," he says, "we should n't mind if the way was ever so long if we had a music to play on."

Ally is n't sure that these would be just the sort of things to take with them, but Harry convinces her by showing her, in the picture, the great load under which Christian is trudging—"Heavier," says the little fellow, earnestly, "than two hurdy-gurdies."

His little sister is nearly as old as Ally, but he discreetly cautions the little girl not to communicate their plans to her.

"Because," says Harry, "she tells mamma all she knows as fast as she knows it, and I know that mamma would never let me go to the celestial city. Why, she won't even let me stay out to grandma's without her—such a great boy as I am, too! So be sure not to let sissy know."

One evening in January William came in with his face beaming with pleasure.

"Guess, Mary!" he exclaimed, before he took off his hat or mittens—"guess who is coming to New York to study medicine with Dr. Hamilton?"

"I do n't know. Gerald Cameron, perhaps."

"Right! You are a Yankee for guessing."

"Well, it was quite a random guess, for I did not suppose that his grandfather would consent to such a plan."

"It seems that Nellie's death has quite changed him. He

has been obstinate enough and long enough too, but—as Mr. Lewis says—has repented just in time to give the lad a chance while he is young. Let me see, he is a year younger than Jamie, is he not?”

“Yes; but tell me, William, how it was arranged. Has Mr. Lewis been to Rosedale?”

“He was there and staid all night in December, but never dropped a word in reference to Gerald’s future prospects. Once or twice he half suspected, he says, that the old man desired him to broach the old theme, but he was not sure, and forbore to vex him in his hour of sorrow. For the old farmer mourns deeply for his fair grandchild.”

“He’d be a brute if he did n’t,” said Mary, wiping her eyes.

“Yes, Mary. Well, last week Mr. Lewis got a letter from him, and he writes that he can no longer oppose what he knows are the boy’s wishes, although Gerald, dear fellow, refrains from mentioning them. It seems that he has always wanted to study medicine. He used to think of it before he came to live with us, Mary, for I remember perfectly well hearing him speak of it when I called one day at their miserable abode. I think the wish was first inspired by his anxiety to relieve Nellie’s frequent headaches, but Mr. Lewis says that he has always inclined to those studies which have a bearing upon the profession that he has chosen, such as botany, chemistry, natural philosophy, physiology, and the like.”

“I did n’t know that Dr. Hamilton took any students.”

“He has one now; old Judge Lincoln’s son. He consented very readily to take Gerald, too, because, he says, the young men will be company for each other, and will be more interested in studying together than separately. Mr. Lewis has written to old Mr. Clare, and all is arranged.”

“When will he come?” asked Mary.

“When he is strong enough to study. He gains very slowly. Mr. Lewis thinks he will not be able to leave home till warm weather. He is to board at Elm Hill, so we

shall see him often. You, Mary, will seem almost like a mother to him."

"I don't know about that. It's a long time since he lived with us, and children forget easily."

"But he has never forgotten us. It an't in his nature to forget a friend. Why, Jamie, you are as silent as death! Haven't you a word to say about this good news?"

"I was thinking, father," replied the boy, "that the sight of us would renew his sorrow, for he knows how much we all loved Nellie."

"That is true; but that will be a source of pleasure, even though it may at first seem otherwise."

There were others besides the Corys who rejoiced sincerely at the cheering prospect now opening before Gerald. First among these was Lila. Selfishness made no part of her nature, and she never once thought of the solitary hours in store for herself. Gerald was a little annoyed by the pleasure she manifested. Now that the long-sought opportunity was secured, he began to feel a strange disinclination to leave home. He thought, and with truth, that Rosedale would seem less cheerful after his departure; yet whenever he hinted that such might be the case, Lila resolutely argued against him, and seemed, in her comforting remarks to the old people, to find something absurd in the bare idea of missing him at all. He knew that she said all this to reassure his grandparents, yet somehow it grated upon his feelings. He would give something, he thought, to know exactly how she felt. He wouldn't have objected to as violent an exhibition of grief as she had manifested when Nellie was to be placed at school, and she had feared the loss of both her young associates. It would be so pleasant to comfort her if she were only sorrowful. But if she were at all disheartened her animated looks gave no evidence of it.

"I did n't think, Fairy, that you would be quite so glad to get rid of me," he said to her one evening when she brought her work and sat down by his side. She was refit-

ting his wardrobe. "I'm sure you will be lonesome enough here to regret me a little."

"Astonishing!" was her provoking response. "Let me measure your wrist for this band. How much must I allow for growing?"

"It is n't very flattering, now, is it, Lila, to see your eyes sparkle so with joy whenever my going away is alluded to?"

Lila laughed merrily. But this had no effect upon Gerald, who looked gravely into the fire, not even deigning to smile.

"To think, Gerry," said Lila, playfully, "of your making yourself dismal just because I am not dismal! Would you be happier if I should lie down and moan and wail like a baby?"

"No; but you are really glad that I am going away—as glad as if you hated me. No, I did n't mean to say that. It is unkind, and I am sorry."

"You know, Gerald, why I am so rejoiced, quite as well as I do. You know that it is not on my account, but you will not make me anticipate gloom and sorrow—they come fast enough of their own accord." He was surprised at the sad expression that her countenance now betrayed, but it was gone instantly. "I am not going to be gloomy if I can help it. If you think me perfectly heartless, Gerald, I will not appear unhappy, or cease to persuade your grandparents that the future is to be pleasant. Besides, I am really, earnestly glad that you are not to give up your studies, or spend your life in doing what you never can like. Ah, Gerry! you will be, instead, a famous physician, respected and honored, and doing—O, such a world of good among the suffering poor! Is it wrong for me to be glad of that?"

"No, indeed! Yet, after all," persisted Gerald, "you will be very lonesome. And it does seem quite selfish for me to leave the care of their old age to you." He pointed to his grandparents. "They have a natural claim on me.

Sometimes, sister, I think I'll give it up, and not go at any rate."

"And spend your days among the potato hills!" she rejoined. "Wouldn't that be nice? If you've nothing better to say than such nonsense I would n't speak at all." And Lila's lips quite pouted.

"Ah, sister, if you were only the least bit selfish, it would make your lot much easier! Don't you know that you will have many more cares when I am away?"

"Ridiculous! All the care on the place would n't burden a fly. Don't *you* know that Mat Marooney is to take your place on the farm? He is strong and willing to work, and if grandpa should be ill, which he never is, Mat will keep things straight under my directions. I can manage him just as I like. We shall be as gay as larks. I shall keep the old folks in good spirits; I know exactly how to do it. If you are not yet satisfied, I will keep a diary of all that occurs—even to the killing of a chicken—and send it to town for your inspection."

"That's a capital idea, Fairy, and I shall keep you to it," he returned, laughing.

"Now, Gerald," she continued, "if you will put off that long phiz of yours till you are fairly away, it will make your going less melancholy to us and none the less cheerful to yourself. Why, you're not going to Asia or Africa! We shall see you often, and hear from you every week unless you forget to write."

"What is all this chattering about?" said grandfather Clare, approaching them.

He had been churning the butter, which, in a fit of ill-humor, had obstinately refused to come in the morning. Having now fairly conquered it, the old lady had taken it in hand, and was working the golden mass into form with much apparent satisfaction.

"Here is your chair, grandpa, and your slippers."

"I see them."

"Your spectacles and newspaper are on the table, and

something besides—only you mustn't know what it is yet."

"Really! Does Gerald know?"

"No, not yet. It is so hard for boys and men to keep a secret that I thought it best not to mention it till the proper time."

"And when is the proper time, little Miss Prudence?" asked Gerald.

"Not till grandma has finished her work, and is ready to sit down with us."

"What a prim little bit of discretion you have become, Lila!"

"Ah, you are discovering my merits! I will take courage."

"But you haven't told me what you were chattering so about," said the old man. "Privacy, Gerald?"

"No, indeed; we were speaking of the future, of our plans, or, rather, of my"—

"Let me tell grandpa," interrupted Lila. "Talking so much will make you ill again. I was trying, grandpa, to convince him that Mat will more than fill his place, and that we shall hardly miss him at all before he will come back with his diploma in one hand and a box of pills in the other."

The old man laughed and winked at Lila in his old, sly manner.

"He'll want my old knapsack and saddle-bags then. Eh, Fairy? We won't forget to hunt them up for him, and to rub off the mold?"

"No, grandpa."

"Pray Heaven that the old mare may be alive to carry him."

"We'll play sick every day to give the new doctor a start in the world. Ah, I must tell you something, grandpa! Irish Mat came to me this morning to ask what 'mather' Cameron was to be, and when I said 'a physician,' he expressed the greatest disgust and disapprobation. 'Faith,

miss,' said he, 'an' all this making o' powthers and pukes is jist the mane bizness, intirely !' "

A simultaneous laugh from Lila's auditors told how Mat's opinion was appreciated.

"Why, Fairy!" exclaimed Gerald, "you imitate his brogue exactly. One would fancy you a genuine Paddy to hear you talk."

"O, thin," she rejoined, roguishly, "an' shure it's yeself that spake that same."

"Do n't, Lila," said grandma, taking off her spectacles to wipe off the mirthful tears that the child's impromptu Irish had called forth, "do n't, my dear. It is ungenerous, if not sinful, to mimic any one."

"Thrus for ye! Grandma, I will not mimic him again if you think it wrong, but I do love to hear him talk when he is really earnest, and I can't help remembering it all."

"Where will Mat sleep?" asked Gerald. "In my room?"

"Well, really, my dear," replied his grandmother, "I haven't once thought of that yet. Strange, when I knew he was to live here. Somehow it don't come easy for me to plan now. But we can manage it somehow, Lila?"

"Yes, grandma, easily. The doctor's room must not be disturbed. It must be kept just as he leaves it, so as to be ready for him when he comes—as he often will, grandma—to occupy it; we must fit up for Mat the room where—where the music-stool was made." Lila hesitated a little at the remembrance involuntarily recalled, but Mrs. Clare did not notice it.

"Why, it is full of rubbish."

"There is room enough in the garret for all that is worth keeping; we can make a bonfire of the old wheels and other trumpery."

"No, no, we will keep them. I like to look at them."

"Well, there's room enough in the garret. I wonder if garrets were not made to contain what is good for *nothing*?"

"My books are in the garret," said Gerald.

"They can be moved down into your room. There will be no dust there when no one occupies it. They won't get upside down or out of place, if no one touches them, so you need not wink so fast, Gerald."

"I wasn't thinking then of what you were saying. I didn't hear the last of it. Tell me again."

"If I find tongue you should find ears. Were you thinking of the rain? Mat says when it rains, 'Some poor hiritic is dying, shure!' How sober you look!"

"I was thinking of Isabel."

"What of her, Gerald?"

"Nothing particular; at least, nothing new. If her health improves as the Spring opens she will be a great comfort to you."

"She is sure to get better," said Lila, hastily. "The warm weather always agrees with her."

"You are forgetting, Lila, what cousin Allan told us of Dr. Hamilton's opinion of her case—that she is always liable to sudden death, even when apparently much better."

"O, Gerald, what cruel words!" She became, in a moment, pale as death. "What did Dr. Hamilton say? I didn't hear you right."

"Why, you heard what cousin Allan said, did you not?"

"No, indeed. How dreadful!"

"I have wondered often that you did not speak of it, and that you were so easy about her. But I did not mean to alarm you so. She is in no greater danger now than she has long been. You have no more cause for anxiety now than when she went to Ohio with you. She was in danger then; she is in danger now."

Lila did not reply; but a faint color came back to her cheek.

"It is better for you to know this now, sister," he continued, "than for you to be suddenly overwhelmed by a fatal change in her complaint. You can be partly prepared for it."

Still she could not speak. How closely is mirth allied to sorrow! Only a moment before her eyes shone with merriment.

"I am sorry I told you to-night," said Gerald, kindly. "But all that I have said can make no difference in her case; she will stay with us just as long. She may live longer than any of us. You know, Lila, how feeble she was last Fall. She is now apparently better than she was then; and some that were perfectly well then are gone."

Lila glanced anxiously toward the old people as he said this. "Ah, I forgot!" she exclaimed suddenly; "we were to have something good when grandma was ready. See! A thick, heavy letter from aunt Ruth. The postmark is Boston; and it is her writing."

"When did it come?" inquired the farmer, putting on his spectacles.

"Now, grandpa, we can't wait to let you read it all to yourself."

"That hardly answers my question."

"It came to-night, just before dark. Little Emma Bradford brought it, and her father took it out of the post-office. Let Gerald read it aloud, please, and we shall all know it together."

The old man consenting, Lila trimmed the candle, and piled fresh logs upon the fire, and then, with the rest, sat down to listen.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Far on the thither side spread out a calm and silent shore,
Where all was tranquil as a sleep, and the crowded strand was quiet."

THE first page of the letter was filled with affectionate inquiries and remarks in reference to the little family circle at Rosedale. Gerald was obliged to pause while these were duly considered and commented on, and then proceeded to matters of more personal interest to the writer :

"I believe I told you in my last letter—written immediately after the death of dearest Nellie—that we were enjoying a season of religious prosperity. Since that time hundreds have been converted and added to the different evangelical Churches of the city. I think there has been no time of such general religious interest during my residence here. It has, for the time, and I hope permanently, disarmed bigotry and sectarian prejudice, and united, in a good degree, the hearts and efforts of Christians of whatever order. We shall confidently expect yet more glorious manifestations of the power of Divine grace, if this catholic, happy spirit continues. If the old jarring and sparring about little differences in opinion and in unimportant Church usages can only be kept in the background, as at present, we may surely anticipate wonderful prosperity. For it is certain that nothing more effectually hinders the progress of our Savior's cause than the contentious and bigoted spirit so frequently displayed by his professed disciples. 'Well,' I hear sister Mary say, 'does Ruth spend all her time in attending meetings?' Not quite. I have been out of the city for the last three weeks, and only returned last evening.

"I have been visiting our cousin, Annie Russell, who, as

you remember, married the handsome but dissipated young carpenter, Albert Whitman. Did you not tell me that they had removed to Michigan long ago? Four weeks ago, Tuesday, I got a letter from her, and found that she had always been living in the same place where they first commenced housekeeping. The letter was a short one—a mere note—giving me no idea of her present circumstances; but imploring me, if I had not forgotten our old cousinly love and companionship, to hasten to her side, for she was in great affliction. This was all the letter contained, except directions as to the best manner of traveling in order to reach her without delay. I was ready to start the next morning; and, as it was uncertain how long my services would be required, I gave my girl, Bridget, permission to spend a few weeks with her own family of brothers and sisters, who are just over from Ireland, and locked up my old-maid's castle till my return.

“Annie lives in a small village on the border of Massachusetts. A walk of five minutes will take one from her house into the State of Connecticut.

“We had not seen each other for twenty-five years, but she knew me immediately. She declared that I looked as fresh and young as ever. I could not say that time had stood still for her; for I should not have known her had I met her elsewhere. Her hair—you have n't forgotten, Mary, how we used to admire it?—is quite thin, and as white as snow. Her form is bent, and there are deep lines of care on her face. How merry she used to be! I could n't help thinking of the clear, ringing laugh that we used sometimes to check. The faintest shadow of a smile just trembled about her lips when I alluded to the careless, happy days of 'long ago;' but the habitual expression of her face is one of quiet, patient sorrow. It was early in the day when I arrived, and, to my surprise, for I knew that she had children, we had both luncheon and dinner by ourselves. But I asked no questions, fearing lest I should unintentionally probe some wound of sorrow. When the dinner dishes were washed and put

away, and we sat down together to spend the short Winter afternoon in recalling the old pleasant memories of earlier days, she began, of her own accord, to speak of the trials that had darkened her married life. Ten years had now passed since Albert Whitman was buried in a drunkard's grave.

“‘I thought, cousin,’ she said, ‘that his cruelty and neglect had wholly rooted out all my love and devotion for him, but when he died I felt a new sorrow crushing me to the very earth. I found that, through all, I had been unconsciously looking forward to, and hoping for, a change even in him; but every lingering hope was now to be given up forever. He was my husband, the father of my children, the lover of my youth. I forgot what else he was; and, O, how gladly would I have died in his stead, if so he might have risen from his cold bed a reformed and happy man! And O, dear Ruth,’ she added, ‘when I see my only son following heedlessly in his father’s steps, I think my heart must break!’

“‘I could think of nothing to say to comfort her. After a moment’s silence, she went on :

“‘He was a lovely baby, and grew up so gentle and obedient, that I half forgot my husband’s cruelty in the hope of seeing him arrive at manhood with no stain upon his character, with no depraved appetite to effect his ruin. O, I can never tell you all I hoped, or how passionately I loved my beautiful child! When his sister was given to me, I felt at first as if I had hardly room in my heart for any besides my darling; but her infantile beauty and winning good temper soon gave her an equal share of my affection. O, Marian! Marian!’

“‘Her white head bent forward to my shoulder, and bitter tears choked her utterance as she pronounced the last words. I clasped her close in my arms; and, Mary, I am not ashamed to own it, I cried heartily. Presently she continued, but without moving :

“‘I had trained my boy to shun alcohol as he would hell

itself. He shrank back, terror-stricken, from the very name of *rum*. In an evil hour his father overheard my warnings, and the boy's doom was sealed. That very night he took him to that tavern yonder, and, in spite of the poor child's cries and obstinate resistance, forced him to drink till he was senseless. He was brought home and laid upon his little bed—drunk ! Day after day was this course pursued, in spite of all my efforts and entreaties. I often followed to the tavern, and supplicated that my darling might not be utterly ruined. My cries of agony seemed like music to the wretches to whom I appealed. Then, Ruth, I would come home, and, shutting myself up with my little girl, spend hours at the footstool of Divine Mercy. I should have died had it not been for those seasons of prayer to God. At first, I hoped that my early lessons to my boy would some time assert their influence ; for he deplored, as deeply as myself, the course he was compelled to pursue ; but too soon I detected a change in him. How, indeed, could he help being corrupted by the evil society into which he was forced ! He began to repeat to his sister the vile language to which he nightly listened. Under the constant stimulus of liquor, his temper became irritable, and, in his frequent bursts of rage, he would utter profanely the holy name of God, the name that he had been so carefully taught to reverence. Ah ! I soon knew that he had acquired a fierce appetite for the unnatural excitement of ardent spirit. When his father died, it was too late to save him ; the fatal appetite had become a second nature. For a few weeks there was a change in him ; he deserted his old associates, and was so thoughtful of me in my sorrow, that hope again sprung up in my heart, and I began to trust in him, and to confide my cares and anxieties to him, when the tavern-keeper again allured him to take just one glass, and my fond dream of bliss was over. There is no hope of his reforming now, cousin ; none whatever.'

“ ‘Not if he remains here, Annie,’ I replied. ‘But do you not think that we can induce him to go to some distant

place. For instance, there is my brother in Ohio. You have not forgotten cousin Tom, Annie ?

“ ‘ No ; I remember him.’ ”

“ ‘ Well, if Frederick could somehow be induced to spend a year or two on his place, he would find plenty of work, and would be away from the temptations that surround him here.’ ”

“ ‘ I should not dare to propose it, cousin Ruth ; he is very suspicious, and would be sure I had been telling you about him.’ ”

“ ‘ Let me manage it, Annie. He is young yet, and I have no idea of giving him up for lost.’ ”

“ ‘ You have not seen him yet. I fear you will agree with me when he comes home. I think sometimes that I feel his degradation and sin less than formerly, and yet it is seldom absent from my thoughts. A reckless sort of despair sometimes takes possession of me. And lately ’—

“ ‘ There is something else, Annie dear,’ I said, for she made no effort to finish her sentence ; ‘ there is something more that you would like to tell me. Let me hear it all, and then we will take counsel together, just as we used to do in the old, bright days, Annie. We’ll get a little sunshine through these dark clouds yet, I’ll warrant. Where is Marian ?’ ”

“ ‘ O, she has been of late my greatest sorrow ! She has grown up beautiful in person, but proud, high-spirited. Young as she is—only eighteen last October—her good looks have attracted many admirers, and several really-advantageous offers of marriage have been made to her. But as if to spoil her prospects for life, and, as it appears to me, with the most unaccountable fancy, my poor girl must fall in love with a vain, worthless fellow, whose only recommendation is the wealth of his uncle, which he may in the course of time inherit. This, and a moderate supply of good looks, has been sufficient to secure him a polite reception in almost every family in this region, although it is generally known that he prides himself upon being that

odious character, a male flirt. His attentions to Marian were very particular for a short time, and she was exulting in the prospect of triumphing over her companions, when the sudden appearance of a new face at an evening party, attracted the notice of her inconstant admirer, and she saw the same attentions lavished on another that she had fondly believed were due to herself alone. You do not know Marian, so I can not make you understand her furious indignation. Her pride was far more deeply wounded than her love. She could not bear the thought of meeting any of her young associates, and the night after the party she left home. I found a note on the table, telling me not to be alarmed, that she was safe and only desired to bury her disappointment and mortification among strangers. I have since learned by accident that she is among the Shakers.'

"A renewed burst of grief followed this confidence.

"'Poor Annie!' I said, caressing as I spoke the thin hand hardened with toil that lay in mine. 'Dear Annie, there is yet cause to hope. I'll warrant that she'll be glad enough to come home. By this time she is tired of all Shakerdom. Is it generally known in the neighborhood where she is?'

"'No one here knows. A friend of ours, who resides in Springfield, saw her as he drove through the Shaker village, and was so surprised that he drove directly here. He agreed to say nothing about it, because while it is a secret her pride will not be an obstacle to her return.'

"'We'll go to-morrow, Annie, and fetch her home. Then, with this care off your mind, we can remember the old times,' I said, anxious to divert her thoughts for a moment from their painful theme. 'Do you remember when we went, wrapped in white sheets, like ghosts, to scare the boys who were robbing grandpa's orchard?'

"'Yes. But O, you do not know Marian! She is so resolute.'

"'Very good. So am I resolute. It is a fine trait of

character when rightly directed. Brighten up, Annie dear. Is that your son coming across the common?"

"She started up hastily as I spoke. 'Yes, cousin, that is Fred.'

"'You will spoil my plans for him if you look so sad. Can we not be cheerful when he comes in?' Her eyes were full of tears. 'Ah, Annie, that will never do! Busy yourself in the kitchen till you are quiet yourself, and leave me to receive him alone.'

"I took up her knitting as she went out, and began to hum the nearest approach to a tune that I could. He entered in a slouching, hang-dog manner, looking very cross, but his countenance became pleasanter when he saw a stranger. I was glad of this. It showed that his pride was not quite dead.

"'Ah, this is Frederick, I suppose,' said I, shaking hands with him cordially, 'my cousin Annie's boy, Frederick.'

"He smiled a little as if he could not help it, but his reply was almost inaudible. Pretty soon Annie came back, and we sat down to tea. All the while we were eating, I was describing to Annie the glorious scenery of the West, and descanting upon the pleasure of my late visit to Ohio. Fred sat clownishly listening—some of the time playing with his knife and fork, and now and then furtively glancing from under his long, uncombed hair at the queer old maid who had so suddenly made herself at home in the family. I knew he was interested in my subject, so after tea I kept on talking as fast as possible and inwardly blessing the Providence that had made me so garrulous. He sat all the evening in the corner, pretending to be asleep, but listening, I knew, with all his might. As the hours wore on and he did not go out, Annie became more cheerful, and finally related several amusing reminiscences of our young days which I had forgotten. Fred opened his eyes and stared with wonder at the smile that for a moment lighted up her pale face. Annie and I slept together, and

she assured me that it was the first evening for a year that Fred had spent at home.

"After breakfast the next morning, we started in a sleigh for Shaker-land. I found some difficulty, at first, in controlling the horse, a high-spirited creature, who seemed to appreciate the good sleighing ; but by the time we had proceeded half a dozen miles, he was as tractable as could be desired. The country about the Shaker village must be very charming in the Summer-time. Annie says that nothing can exceed the care with which houses, grounds, and streets are kept. It looked dreary enough, in its Winter stillness, to more than balance any loveliness that the Summer might bring. The velvet hills were all covered with snow, and the bleak wind whistled, among the tall, branching trees, a desolate tune enough. We had seen only here and there a scattering dwelling along the roads by which we came ; but they had all seemed to be rejoicing in the gladsome sunlight ; and now that we had come to a village—a village, too, celebrated for its thrift and order—it seemed as if the place were prepared for a funeral. There was, I was sure, no genial, hearty life—no real enjoyment of existence in the community. A chill came over me as I breathed the uncongenial atmosphere, and the warm hopes with which I had set out were at once frozen.

"There was no one stirring in the streets, and, except a few quaintly-dressed men, who were foddering cattle by a haystack, there were no persons in sight. Our sleigh-bells, in reckless defiance of the funeral stillness, jingled profanely upon the frosty air.

"In every Shaker village there is what we should call a reception-house. I forget its Shaker cognomen ; but all strangers are received there. We were received at the door by a funny-looking woman, habited in the odd costume of the sect, and looking, in her prim cap and scanty skirt, like a runaway from Noah's ark. We were admitted into a large room, arranged with perfect neatness, where was a bright fire burning on the hearth. Several women, as like

the first as twin beans, were sitting here. I think they had been quarreling, for their faces wore a moody, discontented expression, and the looks interchanged were any thing but affectionate. It is not possible for a system like theirs to work without much jarring and friction among the machinery. A new revelation had just arrived from Lebanon, forbidding the use of swine's flesh; and, although the revelation had a proviso that such pork as chanced to be on hand might be consumed without sin, yet the genuine lovers of swine could not help wishing that Mother Ann would cease to meddle with their diet. Perhaps it was this ghostly interference of their venerated foundress that caused the gloom depicted in the faces of our hostesses. One of them was called an elderess, and exercised some sort of authority, the nature of which I did not learn.

"Our request for permission to inspect the premises was readily granted, the little elderess herself undertaking our guidance. We had agreed to make no inquiries, at first, in regard to Marian, lest, being informed of our visit, she should avoid seeing us. I now proposed to Annie to sit by the fire and rest, while I accompanied our guide.

"'It will be better for your head, Annie; and as you, fortunately, have not so much curiosity as myself, you will be satisfied with my description.'

"She gladly consented, for she was weak with emotion.

"We went into a great many rooms, all as neat as if just out of the drawer, and the beds, in their drab drapery, looked very inviting. Most of these rooms were for the accommodation of strangers, and many weary travelers have been won, by their gratuitous lodging and bountiful fare, to become permanent members of the holy fraternity. The Shakers understand very well this method of reaching the human heart. I found something to admire in every room, and my expressions of pleasure quite won the confidence of my conductress. We had a long chat about their peculiar way of staining and polishing their floors, and she waxed eloquent as she exhibited the numberless odd con-

trivances to insure convenience, as well as cleanliness. She became at last so free and confiding, that she took me into her own sleeping apartment, and, from the depths of a nice little cabinet, brought out, for my inspection, a variety of keepsakes, presented, she said, by those who had loved her before she left the world. There was a little miniature among them, which she did not open, although I felt considerable curiosity in reference to it. I began to query whether it might not betray some old and never-to-be-forgotten attachment, formed when youth, with its gayety and hope, were hers. Holding these mementos of former days in her hand, she told me of early orphanhood, of cruel treatment received in childhood, and darkening her earliest recollections, and of the happier days of youth and blushing earlier womanhood. Was it fancy, or did her face assume a sad expression, and her voice a regretful tone, when she informed me that she had been a Shakeress twenty-three years!

“‘Did you never regret the sacrifice you made in retiring from worldly society? Do you never think of the lost opportunities of doing good to others? Does not this long course of twenty-three years seem like so much time taken from your life?’

“She fixed her eyes steadily upon my face as I made these inquiries.

“‘I have found peace here, and — and — forgetfulness. The holy rites of our religion occupy my time and my mind, and I find little leisure to repine. I am becoming more and more indifferent to the outer world, and happier as a consequence. There is nothing but change, and sorrow, and disappointment outside; here we have rest from all these. We hear nothing of the world’s turmoil; passing rumors of its principal events sometimes reach us, but nothing disturbs the quietude of our retreat. Friend, if the cares or sorrows of life, or a distaste for its enjoyments, should oppress thee, remember always that a peaceful home and a welcome awaiteth thee here.’

"I thanked her, and, remembering the anxiety of Annie, began cautiously to approach the object of my visit.

"Do many grown people join you?" I asked, 'or do you raise orphan children enough to keep your number good?'

"We have had many added to us," she returned, 'since the prevalence of the Miller theory. I don't know how it is that so many step from Millerism to Shakerism. Thou knowest, friend, that the transition can scarcely be a natural one, for the doctrines are as unlike as possible.'

"It may require the same cast of mind," I remarked, 'to believe either.'

"She looked at me wonderingly a moment, as if studying my features, and then continued :

"They never make good Shakers though; they are unstable. Many of them never become established in our faith. They remain here but a short time, and altogether have made us a world of trouble. Now we have one convert to the truth, as revealed by our blessed mother, who is worth any number of them.'

"I should like to see the gentleman.'

"Nay, friend, it is a female. Thee lookest surprised. She is both young and beautiful, as the world has it.'

"Indeed! Can I see this prodigy?'

"Yea; thee shalt be gratified. Follow me to her room. I must go down to give directions to the sisters. She shall show thee the upper rooms; and, I pray thee, turn not away from the holy wisdom of her sayings.'

"This was better than I could have hoped. To have an interview with the mistaken girl alone seemed to promise success, and I could hardly conceal my delight as I followed the Shakeress into a small bed-chamber, where a young girl sat at a little round table writing. She did not raise her head or look round, although she must have heard us.

"Art thou busy, Eliza?" asked my companion.

"Yea. I am writing to my mother. This letter once gone, I shall be free from the world forever; I hope to forget it wholly.'

"As she raised her head and observed a stranger, the crimson deepened in her cheek ; but a momentary, earnest glance satisfied her that I was no one that she had ever known.

" 'It is a visitor from the world,' said the elderess. 'She is tired ; let her rest in thy room awhile, and show her the upper rooms when she is ready. I can trust thee, Eliza, to speak well of the way of truth.'

" 'I will wait on her.'

"Her lip curled scornfully as the door closed, and she sat silently regarding the direction of the letter she had written. I saw that she was unhappy ; but, in her haughty attitude, I could also read the pride and obstinacy of her nature. Every feature of her beautiful face seemed familiar to me, and my eyes involuntarily filled with tears.

" 'You have your mother's bright dark eyes, Marian.'

"She started and looked up in surprise.

" 'And the same beautiful hair,' I continued.

" 'What do you know of my mother ?' she asked, haughtily. 'You are a stranger ; I never saw you before. I am ready to show you the rooms.'

" 'I knew your mother, my child,' I returned, rising and laying my hand on her shoulder, 'when she was young and happy ; long, long before her good, kind heart was broken by the unnatural desertion of her only daughter.'

"She softened instantly. 'O, do not say that, ma'am !' Her voice trembled and faltered, and she raised her eyes imploringly.

" 'It is true. You knew all that she had so long suffered. Is it not enough, heartless girl, that the misconduct of your brother should gnaw continually, like a canker-worm, at the tenderest cords of her life, but you must also conspire to bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave ? In your pride and selfishness you have added the bitterest draught of all to her cup of woe.'

"She shrank back from my grasp and trembled

" 'Spare me, ma'am, I beg !'

“‘Marian, listen ! I do not exaggerate the truth when I say that perseverance in the path you have now chosen will kill her. I know her gentle nature ; it has borne nearly all that it is capable of enduring. The rest of the grave will soon be hers, and you, unnatural child that you are, will be as really a murderer in the sight of God as if you had cut short her days by poison !’

“‘O, do not say such dreadful words, I beg ! I am not so bad as you suppose. You do not know the trial that drove me here.’

“‘Are your trials to be compared with hers ? Has not her life, since your remembrance, been one continued experience of sorrow ? Is not this present trial to which you allude heaviest for her ? And the cause of it is so trivial, Marian ! It was no noble pride that could be so wounded by the caprice of a shallow rake. O, Marian, if you have indeed a particle of pride or self-respect remaining, return with me at once to the home that you have helped to desolate !’

“‘I can not ; O, I can not !’

“‘For her sake, Marian—your long-suffering mother.’

“‘It is too late. I have already promised to remain.’

“‘No promise that you can make can release you from the obligation of honoring and obeying your parents. This is God’s law, and no earthly power can annul it. It is your first and highest duty, next to the allegiance that you owe to God himself !’

“‘Ought I, then, to leave this place ?—to so deceive those who have so trusted in me ? O, madam, whoever you may be, pity me, for I am most wretched !’

“‘I shall never forget the despairing expression of her countenance.

“‘I do pity you,’ I replied ; ‘but I also wish to save you. How long would you be contented here ? Is not the novelty nearly over ? Are you not already disgusted with its sameness and unmeaning mummeries ? With your inquiring intellect and active habits a life here would be

nnendurable. I see that you feel this,' I added, as I saw her shudder at the thought; 'and how can you have the heart to send me back to your mother with the sad intelligence that she is renounced by her daughter?'

"Her lips quivered, and the tears shone in her eyes. I saw that she was yielding.

"'What can I do? If I leave here I must leave privately. I could not look the sisters in the face, and confess myself a hypocrite. No one of them suspects from whence I came. My real name is unknown here. How could my mother know where to find me?'

"'Providence befriended her; no one else, not even your brother has an idea of the truth. Every one imagines that you are visiting distant friends. So you have nothing to fear.'

"She was silent a few moments, and I anxiously waited for the decision that I saw she was endeavoring to make. At last she rose quickly from her chair, and coming to my side whispered:

"'Contrive some pretext to remain here in the house an hour longer. I will manage to join you on the road.'

"'Heaven bless you, my dear child!'

"'Go, go, I beg. Leave me to myself.'

"I found Annie awaiting me in a fever of impatience. I could not reply to the inquiry of her eyes, because other eyes were upon me; but she seemed to gather hope from my cheerful looks. But when, instead of starting on our return, I sat down to enjoy a chat with the Shakeresses, she was wholly at a loss to understand my movements, and I was obliged to avoid her looks, they expressed such earnest remonstrance. She seemed almost vexed with the curiosity I evinced in reference to the general working of the system of Shakerism; and when, in accordance with the invitation of the flattered sisterhood, I partook of apples and tasted their famous metheglin, poor Annie was almost in despair at my unaccountable delay.

"'We have a long ride in prospect, cousin.'

"I know it, Annie. We have plenty of time. I must have one more apple, and then we will go," I said, looking at my watch and ascertaining that the persistent hand had nearly got round to the hour. "What choice fruit! You Shakers really fare pretty well. I'm afraid these delicious spice apples will tempt me to come again."

"'Thee will always be most welcome,' rejoined the elderess, cordially.

"After we got into the sleigh, I would not let Annie drive directly away, as she wished; but lingered several minutes in conversation with those who followed us to the door. At last we were fairly started; but not till we were fairly clear of the settlement would I reply to one of Annie's impatient questions. When a bend in the road took us from the possible observation of those we had left, I turned to her:

"'Now, then, Annie, we can speak without being suspected.'

"She grasped my arm. 'Did you see Marian?'

"'Yes.'

"'Will she come home again?'

"'Do not tremble so, Annie. She is awaiting us on the road.'

"'Where? Are you sure? O, Ruth, no not trifle with me!'

"'I am sure, my dear cousin. She is, as I told you yesterday, heartily tired of Shakerism—thoroughly cured of it, you may depend. There she is, now.'

"Annie had n't time to speak before I stopped the sleigh and the repentant girl was in her mother's arms. She rode home, sitting at our feet, hidden by the buffalo robes, and with her head in her mother's lap. Luckily, Frederick was not at home when we arrived, and we smuggled her into the house with the greatest dispatch. When Fred came in to tea, I observed, with pleasure, a little change in his appearance. His hair was brushed and his face washed. I complimented him upon his likeness to his sister, and again,

in spite of himself, elicited a smile. But he sat in the corner, as on the previous night, without joining at all in the conversation. He was evidently much pleased to see his sister again. As on the previous evening, we managed to say a great deal about the West; and neither Annie nor myself were to blame if a farmer's life in Ohio did not appear desirable. We pressed Marian unconsciously into the service; and her inquiries so often reminded me of something especially interesting, that I was at last obliged to tell her that she must go out to Ohio if she would get a fair idea of the place.

"That will never be. I do not like traveling well enough. What do you think of it, Fred?" asked Marian, suddenly noticing his interest in the conversation.

"I think I should like it."

"On this evening Annie seemed a little more like the blithe Annie that we used to know. The hours sped cheerily by—so pleasantly that the young gentleman in the corner did not once pretend to be asleep, but sat, with his large, bright eyes attentively observant of all we did. We were so cheerful at breakfast the next morning that I could have imagined myself at Rosedale under its wonderful *fairy* influences.

"Marian astonished me. Her mother was right in saying that her pride had been more deeply wounded than her love. Last night she had several times looked a little sad, but not a trace of gloom was now observable upon her features. She relieved her mother of the care of the house, and would not suffer either of us to assist her about the work. It was affecting to see Annie follow her about, as if she was unwilling for a moment to lose sight of her recovered treasure.

"Fred, too, behaved admirably. A light snow had fallen during the night, and he shoveled paths and brought wood and water into the kitchen, and then put a new hinge on the broken-down gate by the street. He began to answer more readily when addressed, and once or twice returned the

endearing appellations that Marian bestowed upon him. Degraded as he had become, I could see that he was proud of his sister.

"At last the chores were done, and he stood awhile uneasily lounging by a window. A number of idle persons were sauntering about in front of the tavern on the opposite side of the common, and his mother's eyes were dim with tears as she marked his frequent glances toward them. I tried to think of some way to engage him in conversation, but no subject of interest presented itself to my mind. Annie's work dropped from her hands as he took up his hat and approached the door.

"'Cousin Frederick,' said I, seizing desperately the first idea that presented, 'would you mind getting up the horse and treating me to a sleigh ride this fine morning? We shall be rather dull while Marian and your mother are preparing dinner. A good drive in the open country is a great treat to me after being shut up in the city. What do you say, cousin Fred?' He assented readily and with apparent pleasure. You should have seen Annie's grateful looks. She kissed my hand repeatedly while she helped put on my furs, and I softly whispered in her ear, 'Courage, Annie!'

"During the ride I succeeded in winning his confidence and making him feel at ease with me. I asked so many questions about the different parts of the prospect, about the houses that we passed, and all the inhabitants thereof, that the string of his tongue was, perforce, loosed in replying to them. He became gradually communicative, and after a little time told me, of his own accord, about the fearful appetite for ardent spirits that he had been forced to acquire, and of its power over him. He spoke of his case as being utterly hopeless. There was a touching melancholy in his looks and voice when he spoke of his mother, and of her early teachings. It was unnecessary to arouse him or to tell him how deeply he had erred, for he knew his condition far better than I could have portrayed it. His knowledge

of his danger, and especially his deep feeling on his mother's account, inspired me with hope.

"'Miss Russell—cousin!' he exclaimed, earnestly, 'God only knows how deeply I feel my degradation, or how strong are the chains that bind me! O, cousin, would that I were dead! There is no escape from this appetite but in the grave!'

"'Do n't talk so, dear Frederick! Think of your mother and sister. How dear you are to them!'

"'Yes, and what a disgrace also. I am always thinking of it. They think I do not feel—that I never think. They do not know—how can they?—what this appetite for liquor is. This cursed appetite! It is at this moment so keen, so fierce, that it takes all my resolution to drive on instead of hurrying back to procure the fiery stimulus it craves. And for this constant hell within me I am indebted to my own father. Heavens! how often I have cursed him in my agony!'

"I involuntarily recoiled from him. He saw it.

"'Do n't be alarmed, Miss Russell. You are frightened at my wicked feelings. I am often frightened too. I think my father must have been a demon, and I have inherited all his wicked passions, with the horrors of remorse superadded. O, cousin,' he said, softening his tone and manner instantaneously, 'you do not know how to pity me! You can never feel as I feel what a wretch I have become! I have no pleasures, no enjoyment; and were it not for my love of reading, I should never lose sight of my disgraceful condition except when stupefied with liquor. How can you pity me? How can you know how strong is the temptation to drown all thought by drinking what, under such circumstances, seems like the nectar of paradise?'

"'I do pity you, dear Frederick, most sincerely. But I have great hopes of you. I believe you will be honored and happy yet. You are young, and have time, if God spares your life, to redeem all the past. Why, my dear fellow, there are thousands and thousands of honorable

men now living, loved and respected, who have risen from lower depths of degradation than you have ever thought of, who have nobly conquered the same fiery craving for strong drink—who asked and received help from above to strengthen them. O, what gladness, what pure joy have they brought to the homes and hearts once so sad and desolate !’

“‘But they were all different from me,’ he answered, sadly. ‘I have tried many times to reform, till I am sure it is impossible. The appetite and the temptations of my associates prove always too strong for me.’

“‘My dear cousin,’ I returned, ‘you must give up these associates ; you will never reform while you indulge in such society. In your present state the smell of alcohol is sufficient to overthrow all your resolutions. Shun the very sight of the poison ; do not even look toward the glittering decanters in the window of the tavern. Stay with those who love you, Frederick, and seek the assistance of God, and you will succeed. Turn your face resolutely toward gaining an honorable and dignified position in life. Think, dear Fred, of the happiness you may thus bring to your mother and sister ! How soon they would turn to you as their natural protector and adviser ! How pleasant to see their love and pride in you ! All this joy, this honor is for you, if you resolutely turn from the poison that is destroying you, soul and body !’

“‘I dare not promise even to attempt it,’ he replied ; ‘I have so little strength. You do not know how soon I should be overcome.’

“‘You will not be overcome at all if you do not join your associates. You must renounce them wholly ; give them up now and forever. That will not be hard, Fred ; for I am sure that you have no real affection for them ; and you’re not a coward to fear them. Your desire for liquor will never be stronger than it is now. You can bear it, for you are already bearing it nobly. It will lessen day by day, and in a few weeks you will stand free.’

"I waited some time for his answer.

" 'I must go away from this place, Miss Russell, or there is no hope ; I'm sure of it.'

" 'Very well ; that is easily done. You can go West a few years ; you can go to my brother's, in Ohio. I will write to him this afternoon, if you desire it, to propose your coming. Only promise me faithfully, Frederick, that you will henceforth abstain from all intoxicating drinks, and I have no fears for you.'

" 'I will do my best to reform, cousin ; I dare not promise more. If I succeed I shall owe it to you.'

" 'Ah, Frederick,' I returned, 'if I could but persuade you to seek help from God ! I should be sure you would succeed if you tried trusting in him.'

" 'My mother taught me to pray when I was very little ; I've forgotten it since ; I do not care about recalling it now. If God had been my friend, he would have kept me from all this evil. Wasn't I given up to the power of the devil in my childhood ? I hope I do not shock you, Miss Russell, but it seems to me that God cares very little about us.'

"I was not surprised that he had imbibed infidel principles with his intemperate habits. I believe they go naturally together. But I thought best not to reply to them.

" 'About going to Ohio,' I asked ; 'shall I write ?'

" 'Yes ; I want to be off directly.' His face flushed, and he hesitated a moment. 'I should like that some one—only one—and one that may be trusted, should know what I am striving for. It would help me, I think.'

"I told him of Charles, and it was settled that I should write to him.

"Marian had dinner and hot coffee awaiting us. The ride had given us an appetite, and I am afraid we did more than justice to her excellent cookery. It really seemed as if Frederick grew handsome and manly every hour. At the table he announced his intention to go to Ohio, and frankly gave all his reasons for going, and imparted to his rejoicing mother his newly-formed resolution to become a

reformed man. You may be sure that we were now a happy circle.

"I had written my letter in the afternoon, and Fred was reading aloud to us, when Mr. Granby, Marian's inconstant lover, called. He is a smart, dashing young man, with immense whiskers and a showy watch-chain, and any amount of assurance. I wondered, as much as poor Annie had ever done, at Marian's unaccountable taste; and I once thought that I detected a similar wonder in her own eyes as she observed him. There was not the slightest appearance of agitation in her manner, or tremor in her voice, as she introduced him to me.

"'You have been absent a long time, Miss Whitman,' he said, sitting down near her. 'Our parties have hardly been worth attending without your presence. May we hope that you will not again desert us?'

"'I have no intention of leaving home at present.'

"'I called to ask for the pleasure of a private interview,' he continued, glancing at us. 'Can I see you alone?'

"'There are none present but confidential friends. If you please, I will hear what you have to communicate here.'

"I saw Fred smile as he spread open the newspaper and held it before his face. Mr. Granby began, awkwardly enough, to deplore the little misunderstanding that had arisen between them, and made out a very agreeable but hardly-plausible explanation of his conduct. Marian heard him through with a languid sort of composure, was very sorry that he should have been annoyed by a circumstance which she had nearly forgotten, and begged him, yawning as she spoke, not to weary himself by discussing longer what was of so trifling consequence. You can guess how surprised and vexed he appeared. He had plainly expected a somewhat rapturous restoration to favor. He tried to look hurt, and assumed for a moment quite a love-lorn expression, but it was no match for Marian's quiet indifference. He lingered

till tea-time, as if awaiting some change in her; but she conversed carelessly on commonplace subjects, and by her manner plainly intimated that she considered so long a call more tiresome than pleasant. I could not tell whether her indifference was real or assumed. I should hardly know what to think of her in either case. She is quite a puzzle to me. She never speaks of her sojourn among the Shakers, or of her recreant lover. The expression of her face is a contented one, but a little mischievous at times, if I judge rightly. Gentle, merry, and affectionate, busy from morning till night in kind offices, I can not choose but love her, though I do not pretend to understand her.

"After her return she slept with her mother, and I occupied a chamber adjoining Frederick's room. She had been home a fortnight, when one night, soon after we had all retired to rest, I heard what seemed to be a small pebble strike the window at the head of my bed, and a low murmur of voices fell on my ear. It was not a moonlight night, but the snow on the ground and the clear stars overhead gave light enough to render near objects distinguishable; so I got up and peeped out behind the muslin blind. There were two men standing in the garden, looking up, not to my window, but to Fred's. Presently I heard him softly raise the sash. I listened with all my might.

"'I say, Fred,' I heard one of them say, in a loud whisper, 'dress yourself quick and come down. We are going to have a jolly time over to the tavern—a nice supper and a dance. Capital oysters and wine, Fred! The Lane girls are there, and the Coopers. Ann Rowe has just come, and somebody else—you can guess who. Come, hurry down!'

"'No, Jim,' I heard Frederick reply, 'I can't; I'm tired and sleepy.'

"'Is that the reason?'

"'Not wholly, perhaps, but it is reason enough.'

"'No, it is n't. To tell you the truth, Olive Humphreys sent us for you. She is wondering—and so are the rest of

the girls—what has become of you. I did n't tell her, Fred, that a Methodist old maid had come all the way from Boston to convert you, and that you were not allowed to take the air unless she accompanied you.'

"That is not true, Jim, as you know very well. If I choose to ride with my cousin, and to try to make her visit pleasant, who 'll hinder me, I should be glad to know ?"

"Hush ! Do n't speak so loud. We an't come to quarrel with you—only to unhitch you for an hour or two from the saint's apron-strings. We've got a free ticket for you ; and you will be back before day, and nobody the wiser. You can't think how grand the hall looks, and the supper-table too ! But we must hurry back. Rig up as quick as you can, Fred ; it's confounded cold waiting here !"

"He made no reply, and I trembled lest his resolution should be broken.

"Are you coming, Fred ?"

"No !"

"You 'll be sorry, you may depend. You 'll curse yourself that you were such a fool ! Jack Webster is blessing his soul because you are not there. He's thick with Miss Olive, you 'd better believe. She is looking beautiful, and Jack is certainly bewitched. What shall I tell her is the reason of your staying away ?"

"She is not likely to ask," said Fred, and I thought his voice was unsteady ; 'but if she does tell her that my wicked habits have well-nigh brought the gray hairs of the best of mothers in sorrow to the grave, and that, God helping me, I will henceforth be a comfort to her—to her first of all the world !'

"He shut the window immediately, and I heard him groan aloud as he threw himself upon the bed. Poor fellow ! It was to him a sore temptation, but it was bravely resisted. I began to feel sure of him now, and very fervent were the prayers that night offered for him by the Methodist old maid, all the way from Boston.

"The next day came a letter from Charles Russell. It was

just what we desired, and so frank and manly in its tone, and so full of courage and hope for Fred, that his heart was completely won by it. Charles stated that he was to go on business immediately to Cleveland, and if Frederick could start within a week after the reception of his letter, he would find him there. I had been so sure of this result that we had already got his wardrobe in readiness, and he left home in good spirits two days afterward.

“Marian alone now gave me uneasiness, the more because I could not comprehend her. Her gayety seemed so unnatural after so long a season of depression. One thing is certain, she never really loved Granby. It was the fancy of a moment, heightened by the desire to triumph over her associates. Her treatment of him often appeared to me perfectly heartless; and then I have seen her exhibit such unaffected sympathy with the unsightly beggar at the door, that she seemed as tender-hearted and beautiful as an angel. Her young friends have been in crowds to visit her. It is easy to see that she is a favorite among them—an especial favorite, I fear, with the young gentlemen, who greatly relish the merry carelessness of her manner toward Granby. They jest with her in his presence about ‘a ridiculous, unfounded rumor,’ which, they tell her, was current during her absence, that she was in love with him, and greatly afflicted by his desertion of her, and she laughs as if it were the most comical idea ever conceived. Granby’s looks of annoyance at such times have given rise to a report, which Marian takes no pains to contradict, that he has been rejected by her. He furiously denies it, but nobody believes him. He once appealed to her in company to right him by telling the truth, but her mirth was so contagious that the poor fellow was fairly laughed out of the room. I often tremble for her. She knows that she is beautiful, and carefully studies the effect of dress. Over and above all, she is a girl of excellent judgment and prudence in household affairs, and carefully improves every opportunity to cultivate her mind. The great fault in her

character is no doubt pride; but the careless freedom and gayety of her manner in promiscuous society are wholly at variance with my old-fashioned ideas of what is proper. But I am an old woman, and society has been progressing, and it may be that I am too prim and antiquated in my notions of feminine decorum.

“What a long letter! you will say. But I am at home again, and have plenty of leisure and quiet, and so I write on and on, without considering the trouble you may have in deciphering the prosy manuscript. I am glad Gerald is to be a doctor. In our old age, John and Mary, when we forget the name of the herb we need, how nice it will be to consult our sober young physician, whose handsome eyes are watering with sympathy behind his glasses—all eminent doctors, whether of medicine or divinity, wear spectacles—and to rely upon his affection as well as upon his skill! Adieu! God bless and keep you all! R. RUSSELL.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Bonnie Mary Hay, I can loe nane but you."—SCOTCH SONG.

THE bland, warm air and the genial sunshine had been for nearly two months employed in reproducing and coloring the Spring drapery of the fields and hills, before Gerald was strong enough to commence the study of his profession.

The garden south of the house began to display a goodly array of tulips, fleurs de lis, daffodils, and other Spring flowers, and the latticed Summer-house was already half hidden by the delicate green of its vines. Lila and Isabel, suddenly seized with a horticultural mania, had transformed the broad plat of green in front of the house into a young wilderness of ornamental shrubbery. In former years farmer Clare had resolutely opposed any innovations upon the long-established green that sloped from his door, like a velvet carpet, down to the narrow cart path that led to the village. But the old man had buried a good deal of the obstinacy of his nature in the grave of his fair grandchild, and seemed now to find great pleasure in studying the happiness of his few remaining treasures. Therefore, after a little opposition, and a few objections that meant nothing, and a stipulation that the improvement should not impede the view from the house, he very graciously consented to deliver up the aforesaid green to the discretion of the young people.

Mat Marooney, who had come early in April to live at Rosedale, was often pressed into the service, and Gerald entered with much interest into the plans of the young ladies. Landscape gardening was surely never more delighted in. Till Gerald's departure, it was no strange thing to see the three young friends and their rough Irish assistant

working together, for half a day at a time, in the open air. They were all stronger and better for it.

Esquire Thorpe directed his gardener to supply them with such shrubs and slips as they fancied, and to remove to Rosedale a variety of vigorous shrubs which had already taken root and blossomed, and which crowded the grounds about his house.

The graceful bush-honeysuckle, so beautiful in Spring, with its profusion of buff, and pink, and white blossoms, and so brilliant with its dark crimson berries in Summer; the May tartarian; the laburnum, with its golden curls and tassel-like foliage; the Japan pear; the viburnum, syringa, and althea were among the varieties thus transplanted.

The walks were bordered with box, wax-berry, flowering almonds, and delicate shoots of white and purple spirea.

In the corners were rose acacias, which the gardener forewarned them would be always sprawling in every direction and always requiring to be trimmed. In the open spaces were magnolias and Chinese fringe-trees, and fanciful trellises, displaying considerable mechanical skill, were placed by Gerald in different parts of the ground to support the jessamine, wistaria, clematis, and woodbine, which, though just planted, were expected in a few seasons to outdo their older climbing neighbors, the honeysuckle and prairie roses. The old house began to look really picturesque amid its bright surroundings, and the grand old trees, like loving patriarchs of the green wood, placidly but proudly overlooked the aspiring young shoots at their feet.

The young people were very happy in their beautiful employment. What was sad in the past began to assume less dreary hues, and their plans for the future were cloudless as ever.

At last came the evening before Gerald was to leave home. Zeno Bradford, who was spending his school vacation at home, and Isabel had been with them during the afternoon. Zeno came often to Rosedale, where he was

always a favorite guest. Lila's face lighted up with pleasure whenever he appeared, and no sister could have been more delighted with the change and improvement in him.

Still, in spite of the past, in spite of her sisterly kindness for himself and his knowledge of Zeno's history, Gerald was not yet wholly free from his old jealousy, and could not see Lila's interest in the advancement of her old *protégé* without considerable disturbance. He felt ashamed of it, he reproached himself with his want of magnanimity, but the old feeling remained after all. He could not bear to think of Zeno and Lila together, and he found it nearly impossible to think of them separately. The undisguised regard for each other with which they always met was gall and wormwood to him, and he would sit moody and irritable, and sometimes give such sharp replies to her playful inquiries, and so resent the light-heartedness that charmed them all, that her eyes would fill with tears and contradict the careless manner that she invariably assumed.

Then he hated himself for vexing her, and looked with increasing dislike upon Zeno, who, he thought, silently resented his provoking language and demeanor. Isabel told Lila that she could not talk with him now, and that he was not so handsome as he used to be. Poor Lila began to think that she had entirely lost the brotherly affection that had so long been hers, and fancied that, in his anticipation of learned and refined society, he had already begun to estimate hers at its true value.

"Ah, well," she said to herself one night when she had thought of this till her cheek burned and her head ached; "I won't care any more about it! I have not altered, I know. The change is in him. He has changed so suddenly too. I can't understand it. Strange that he should choose this one week, just before he leaves home, to be so cross and touchy, when he is naturally so gentle and kind! It is n't regret at leaving home that so alters him; sorrow would not make him unkind. Till this last week he has *never seemed* to think I could have a fault; now, I am

never right. I wonder who appointed him censor of my words and actions! He will go day after to-morrow. Perhaps," said the child, after a thoughtful pause—"perhaps, when he is away he'll be sorry for this. For I know he will find no warmer hearts, no friends more true than those he will leave here."

So matters stood when the evening before his departure arrived. Isabel and Zeno had gone home, the old folks were busy in the house, and Lila sat down in the old seat by the door to watch the sunset. It was very gorgeous, but she seemed for once half insensible to its glorious beauty. Presently Gerald came and sat down by her side. Perhaps it was the quiet of the hour, it might have been the memory of the past, or, perchance, the coming parting on the morrow that saddened them; but, from whatever cause, both faces wore a melancholy expression as they sat silently together. He, grown so tall and manly, with his thick curls clustering about his forehead and shading his bright, dark eyes, with the downy shadows of his first silken mustache upon his lips, and the seal of early manhood upon his brow; she, small and delicate, a child in person yet, so slender and fragile that the increasing curvature of the spinal column became daily more observable, and, with the exception of darker hair, in no respect grown handsome, yet with the same indefinable spiritual beauty encircling her as of yore and attracting all hearts to her.

Side by side they sat, looking steadily upon the iris hues that gradually faded upon the western sky. Gerald spoke first:

"I shall be far away, Lila, when the sun sets to-morrow evening."

He spoke in his old, kind manner, and Lila looked up brightly to answer:

"Yes, you will see it as I used to see it, glittering upon the spires and domes of the city. It will make them very brilliant; but I had rather watch it here. How still and peaceful it is! It makes the hour seem holy. I don't

believe there is another place in the world where it is so very lovely. Do you?"

"Why, yes. I suppose there must be. But there is probably no place that would seem the same to us. It is our home, you know. That constitutes its chief charm. Don't you think sometimes that it is a little too still here?"

"No!" she replied, in a surprised tone.

"And you are never wishing for a little of the noise and confusion that we remember as a part of the city?"

"What a question! As if a racket could be pleasant!"

"I do n't think I am singular. I believe it is natural to most people—excepting, of course, poets and poetesses, and other romantic rarities—to like to see things stirring, to like the bustle of business. There is something cheering about it. It seems as if somebody was alive, which can hardly be said here."

"Indeed! I knew a young gentleman who was a few days ago wishing that he could pursue the study of medicine by himself so as to remain at Rosedale. He seemed in earnest too."

"Very true," replied Gerald, laughing at the remembrance; "but it was for your sake, sister. I do n't like to leave you alone."

"Alone! Will you always harp on that string? Are not Isabel and I together every day? I shall have to assist grandma, and fill your place as well as my own, so that the old folks will not miss you too much. I shall not get a minute's leisure to feel lonely myself. Besides," she added, turning to him with a bright smile upon her face, "there is Zeno! He will come every evening, and his vacation lasts a month yet. What is the matter, Gerald?"

He turned almost rudely away, and answered, "Nothing."

"I'm afraid that's a story. You bit your lip, and frowned yourself quite homely. Well, never mind. What was it we were saying?"

"You were telling of the felicity in store for you when I should be gone, and you could enjoy undisturbed the society of Zeno Bradford."

Lila opened her eyes wide at this unexpected reply, and a roguish expression of merriment drove all the gravity from her face. She began to understand his late petulance and moroseness, and it seemed so ungrateful after her sisterly care and attention, and so unjust, too, toward Zeno, that she resolved at once, in her honest indignation, not to humor him in the least.

"Ah, jealous again!" she said, peeping over his shoulder to see his face.

"No—at least—well, I can't help feeling a little provoked. I think that, after we have lived here so long together, it is vexatious that you will prefer that clownish fellow to me. Not that I am so worthy of being loved as to exclude all others, but I have a better claim on you than he has."

"I suppose one's preferences are free, at all events?"

"Yes, Lila. But can't you teach me the charm he exercises? I should like to know it. I might then hope to share equally with him in your regard. What is his chief attraction?"

"In the first place," she returned, "he is always gentle and good-natured; he is never grum and surly like a spoiled bear; he does n't scowl and act as if he'd enjoy biting my head off if I happen to look at or speak to any one else. He's a noble fellow! I like him very much, I'm sure."

"Do I look like a bear, Lila?"

"I can't see through your skull to tell how you do look."

He turned round pleasantly. "I have vexed you, Lila. I often do so of late; but I am always sorry, and reproach myself for it. We must not spend this last evening in quarreling."

"I have not quarreled with you."

"But you are displeased with me, Lila."

"Well, you are so unreasonable. As if I were robbing

you of some right by speaking to Zeno! Your treatment of him is unchristian, and hardly gentlemanly. No matter how pleasant and cordial you may be, you are an iceberg immediately if he comes in. So kind as he was during your illness, and such a faithful friend to grandpa when dear Nellie died! I would n't have believed it was in your nature to be so ungrateful."

"I am not ungrateful, Lila. I despise myself for these angry feelings more than you can despise me. The idea of what may happen in a few years, when you become a woman, Fairy, is what haunts and torments me. If I were sure that you would never marry him, if you would promise to be always mine, my little sister now, and," he whispered softly, "my wife in the time to come, I could go away free from all these miserable and wicked feelings, and as happy and light-hearted as yourself."

Her eyes expressed the astonishment with which she had listened to his last words, and a deep carnation blush overspread her face.

"I am only a child, Gerald."

"A child in years, I know, but a woman already, cousin Allan says, in intellect. I could never live—I would n't try—if you should marry him. You must be the sunshine of my future, Fairy, or it will be all darkness."

He looked eagerly for her reply, and saw with surprise the expression of sorrow that suddenly clouded her features.

"Let us be as we have been, Gerald. We are too young to bind ourselves with promises. We are inexperienced, and can not tell what will be best in the future. Sometimes I can not bear to think of the future, Gerald. It is fraught with all that is bright and beautiful for you, but it seems to have no happy promise for me. Let us not speak of it."

"I do not understand you," he said, tenderly drawing her slight form closer to his side. "What is the sorrow that you have, or that you dread in looking forward? Tell me what it is, little sister."

She made no reply, but warm tears fell on his hand as she bent her head to conceal them.

"Will you not tell me? I shall go away unhappy if I leave you so sorrowful. I shall be puzzling myself all the time that I am gone to imagine what it is that grieves you. Is it a reason why you will not promise what I desire so much?"

"You will not think it a reason now, Gerald, but it would be one in a few years."

"Let me hear it, little prophetess. There, let your head rest on my shoulder, and let me dry up those tears. There should be nothing but joyous smiles upon the face of one so good and pure. Is your trouble a secret?"

"No, no! I dare say you've thought of it many times. You must have noticed, of course," said Lila, speaking in a low, hurried tone, "that I am getting more crooked and homely every day. Hush! Do n't interrupt. It's bad manners, and I know what you would say. I am not likely to ever be any better looking, unless something strange should take place, such as my getting well and strong again. I shall soon be a fright!"

"Impossible, Lila! How can you utter such treason against yourself when"—

"Hush, hush! Be silent till I get through. I am not mistaken. But should I remain only as plain as I am now, do n't you see that I am not suited"— She hesitated and stopped.

"I see often, and with great anxiety, that you are not well; but your usual cheerful gayety makes us forget that you are an invalid. You never complain."

"I was going to say that you will find in the busy world many and many a one who is beautiful as well as accomplished, and who, in this respect, can be a fitting companion for you. Then how trying and vexatious would it be to you to be tied to a little deformed country girl, so plain and misshapen as not to be presentable in society! For your sake, Gerald, we will have no promises. You are accus-

tomed to my looks now, but in a year or so, when you come out to see us, I shall appear like"—

"Like an angel!" he interrupted her by exclaiming. "Is that all of the famous reason?"

"Yes; is it not enough?"

"It do n't weigh a feather with me, and, what is more, it never will. If all that you dread were possible, which it an't, it would make no difference to me. You would be Lila still; the same beautiful smile, the same glorious voice, the same noble mind. I could find no other in the whole world like you."

She smiled as she shook her head.

"But seriously, Fairy, I want some sort of a promise. When I have finished my studies and come back here unchanged in feeling, as I know I shall if I am alive, and ask you then, when we are older, to be my own always, may I be sure that you are not promised to any one else?"

"Yes, you may be sure of that."

"I may go away satisfied that you will never be the wife of Bradford?"

"Yes; and that he will never desire it," replied Lila in her natural, lively manner.

"I may please myself, when I think of the future, by imagining myself a successful suitor here, may I not?"

"Do not tease me."

"I shall come out often to see you."

"But we shall let this subject rest for years. And you're not to be jealous again, do you hear? Because you haven't an idea how disagreeable it makes you. O, how ridiculous!"

"I am to start early; suppose we bid each other good-by now, Fairy."

"I haven't got any speech ready for the occasion," she returned in her old bantering tone; "if you have one, it is rather late, but I will wait till you declaim it."

"What nonsense! You know what I mean."

"No, I do n't."

“Listen ! I will whisper it. It is one kiss for Lila Wood and two for Lila Cameron that is to be !”

She broke away from him, and ran laughing into the house. In a moment more he heard her singing to his grandparents a blithe and happy song, as if she had never known care or sorrow.

The short interview had taken a weight from his mind, and he could go away easy now.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"So fades a Summer cloud away ;
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er ;
So gently shuts the eye of day ;
So dies a wave along the shore."

IN spite of all Lila's resolutions and protestations to the contrary, she missed Gerald quite as much as he had predicted. What a long day followed his departure! She went about the house singing as merrily as a bird, laughing and joking with the farmer and tenderly petting the old lady, till Mat, in his undisguised admiration, declared that she behaved "comfortable and illegant, intirely." Yet her heart had never felt heavier or more truly desolate. If she relaxed for a moment her efforts to interest and cheer the old people, she was pained to observe that their features were immediately overspread with gloom, reminding her of the sad time when Nellie died.

All through the early part of the day she managed to keep them in good spirits; but as the long afternoon wore slowly on, she was often silent. She had expected Isabel, and had listened in vain for the pony's step on the bridge, and she knew that Zeno was gone with his mother to spend a few days in a distant town.

"Gerald was right," she thought, as she sat down alone in the seat by the door; "I am alone, and lonely too. And the sunset is sad to-night as well as beautiful."

She thought a little—she could not help it—of what he had so earnestly said to her the night before; but true to her mistaken estimate of her own attractions, she never for a moment thought it possible that, after becoming acquainted with more favored ones, he would ever willingly

repeat the wish that had sounded so sweet to her, that she should be the companion of his life.

"He will see in a little time that he has thought too highly of me, that he has overestimated me, and when the time comes he will be glad and grateful to me that he is bound by no promise."

And she resolved that if then his pity for her or his appreciation of what she had been to his grandparents should prompt him to renew his offer, she would be true to his interests and steadily oppose any such sacrifice of himself upon the altar of gratitude. Still, the consciousness of his present love and sincerity sent a warm thrill of joy to her heart, and tinged her cheek as she thought of the dark, expressive eyes that only last night were bent so lovingly upon her. A smile crossed her face as she remembered his jealousy.

"How can he so often get possessed of the idea that Zeno is more dear to me than himself! What a wretched week he made for us all because of that foolish notion! Zeno is so good-humored and so grateful to me, and is getting to be so easy and graceful in his manners and conversation that no one can help liking him. But Gerald was always so handsome, so gentle and kind—only during his fits of jealousy—so noble always," said the affectionate girl to herself; "and as we get older there is something so different in our affection for each other from my regard for Zeno! As if our interests and sympathies were the same! As if we were only one person," she added aloud, the last sentence finally expressing the idea she sought.

Just then she raised her eyes and espied a gentleman walking slowly up the lane.

"Grandpa! grandma! come here! Here's cousin Charles from Ohio!"

The old people hurried to the door and joined her in welcoming him.

"Cousin Charles," said Lila as they went into the house together, "I can't tell you how glad I am to see you. We

are all so dull and spiritless because of Gerald's being gone. And now you must tell us of every body and every thing out West."

"I'm afraid that neither my knowledge nor my memory would serve me to do that; if I answer half of your questions, Miss Lila, I think you should be satisfied."

Farmer Clare and his wife had nearly as many questions to ask as Lila, and cousin Charles was soon bewildered with the multiplicity of the replies required of him.

"An' there be a drought of a silence in 'Hio, shure!" said Mat, as Lila went for a moment into the kitchen, where he was eating his supper. "Och! the power o' talk the mon has brought from that haythen counthree! An they all spake the like o' that, an' whin kin the crathurs slape o' a night? Arrah! Miss Lila, darlint, an' shure, whin the tongue is so glibberin' there 's a wantage—a wantage somewhere, as thrue as a mass!" repeated Irish Mat, wisely shaking his head, and cutting a mighty slice of cold ham.

"I wish Isabel was here, cousin Charles," said Lila, as, laughing at Mat's solemn gravity, she returned to the parlor. "She hardly ever speaks of you, cousin, and only reads such little bits of your letters to us as are not at all interesting; but she'll be as glad—O, as glad as I am to see you!"

"Thank you. I have already seen her. I called as I came through the village."

"Indeed! Then perhaps you know why she did not come to give my music lesson this afternoon."

"She had company, I believe," he answered, laughing.

"Yes, I understand. But when her visitor came this way, why did she not accompany him? Grandma, let us send Mat over for her. Can we not wrap her so closely that she will not take cold?"

"It will be useless to send to-night," said cousin Charles; "she has gone to bed with the headache."

"Occasioned," rejoined Lila, "by too suddenly meeting a long-absent friend."

"No, I think not. I suppose your man will be busy in the morning, so I will drive over early and bring her here."

"My! how obliging! Are all the youth at the West so accommodating?"

"Now, cousin Lila, you are not to tease me. I have forgotten none of your old tricks. I am going to Boston to see aunt Ruth the day after to-morrow. Should you not like to accompany me?"

"And go to see Mount Auburn, and the Monument at Bunker's Hill, and climb to the dome of the State-House, and see the shipping and the little islands sparkling all over Boston Bay?"

"Yes, if you wish to," he replied, laughing at her animated looks.

"And go to those good, religious meetings that aunt Ruth writes about?"

"I have no objection, if you will not drag Miss Lee and myself with you."

"O, Isabel is going, then? What a strange plan!"

"Why, you knew it at first. I saw it in your face."

"Ah, I remember the old rides out West, cousin Charles! I shall not go to Boston with you. Why, I might be lost, or killed, or stolen twenty times in a day, and you would not miss me!"

"I shall be more thoughtful and attentive now. I am older and more considerate. She can go, aunt Mary, can she not?"

"Certainly, if she desires to. She has been too much confined at home since her return from Ohio, and needs the change, I dare say."

"Do you want to go, Fairy?" asked the old man, in a tone of funeral solemnity, as he thought of the loneliness that Gerald's departure had occasioned.

"No, grandpa; I'd rather stay with you. You can't spare me a single hour. The old house would get full of dumps; and besides," she added, with a roguish glance at Charles, "I'm afraid to travel alone. You can tell aunt

Ruth, cousin, how much I wanted to see her, and that nothing but the remembrance of the dangers formerly encountered in venturing out with only you and Isabel could have prevented my accompanying you."

"I shall not repeat a word of such nonsense. Tomorrow, little cousin, you must contrive to let me get a look of the wise clergyman who tried to keep the prize from you. You see, they will ask me, when I get home, if I have seen the elephant."

"Tell us about Fred!" exclaimed Lila suddenly; "Frederick Whitman, you know. Aunt Ruth wrote to us about him."

"He is well and doing well. He is really a fine fellow."

"Does he abstain wholly from intoxicating drinks?" asked Mrs. Clare. "Is he really a teetotaler?"

"He drinks nothing but cold water; not even cider or beer. At first he took tea and coffee, but he has left them off. I do not know a young man who appears more promising. He has sent for his mother to come on, and keep house for him. I think he means to settle permanently there."

"Will his mother go?"

"She has not decided. I am going to see her before I return. Her daughter is unwilling to go, I believe."

"My sister Ruth wrote us a long account of my cousin Annie's trials. I hope that brighter days are in store for her."

"She will forget her sorrows when she is again with her son and sees the change in him."

"You have never known any great sorrow," said grandma, laying down her knitting in her lap and anxiously regarding him through her spectacles. "Death has never entered your home and borne away its choicest treasure."

"No, aunt Mary, our family circle is yet unbroken. We have been wonderfully favored. I have hardly thought of death as having any thing to do with us; and we have so

very seldom been ill that I find it difficult to realize that the common lot of mortals must be ours also."

"My dear nephew," said the old lady earnestly, "we must not let our affections twine too closely about what is mortal. Disappointments are constantly occurring, and our most cherished ones are taken away. We must learn to hold loosely every treasure but the eternal and the heavenly."

"Why do you speak so earnestly to me, dear aunt," he asked in a surprised tone.

"Because you seem to be so unconscious of the blow that is ready now to fall upon your head; and because it is better that you should be prepared."

"What do you mean, aunt?" He rose up in alarm and came to her side. "It can not be that you refer to Isabel! Say at once that you do not."

"The fresh color in her cheek is unnatural, Charles. It is a bad symptom. Her doctor, a skillful physician, has detected heart disease, and—and pronounced it incurable."

Charles Russell sank into a corner of the lounge, and covering his face remained a long time silent. He could not bring his mind to comprehend the calamity that threatened him.

"You do not mean, aunt," he said at length, "that her case is hopeless. If she were at the West, away from your variable climate, would there be no chance for her permanent recovery? She was much improved by her stay there."

"It might prolong her life; but I fear there is no hope of her getting well."

He rose abruptly and went out into the night air. For an hour he paced up and down the walk in front of the house, and then coming in, looking very pale and worn, he asked to be shown to his room.

Lila, who, to hide her own emotion, had been standing behind the old man, smoothing with a brush his gray hair, obeyed the call of Mrs. Clare, and taking a candle, preceded

him in silence along the hall and up the stairs. She was leaving him at the door, when he looked up, and started back as he saw the expression of her face.

"Lila!"

She turned back. "Is there any thing I can do for you to-night?" she asked.

"Yes. Do not look so wretched; all may yet be well. The doctor may be mistaken. It is difficult to detect a real disease of the heart. *Post-mortem* examinations frequently prove that the decisions of the faculty are not infallible. Her cough will cease, I am confident, if she will go immediately West. Your dreadful climate is annually destroying hundreds who would live to old age with us, and yet you all cling to this region as if every cutting east wind were a breeze from paradise. I shall get the most distinguished physicians to see her."

"O, cousin Charles! must all that we love die? Must all that is beautiful, and good, and generous be taken away? You may be sure that she is in great danger always—every moment. I know it all the time, even when I please myself with thinking that she may recover. You must get used to thinking of it, so that it will seem less dreadful and sudden at last."

"Does she know it, Lila?"

"Yes, and is wholly resigned to it. She talks of it as cheerfully as we talked of going to Boston."

He bade her good-night and shut the door, but opening it directly said, without looking round:

"Let us pray for each other to-night, cousin, for we both need strength."

Lila sent Mat for Isabel early in the morning. She was in the sitting-room when Charles came down, looking haggard and unrefreshed. He started back on seeing her.

"Really!" she exclaimed, laughing cheerfully, "one would think I was an unwelcome ghost, who had suddenly appeared to you. Do I look so frightful this morning?"

"I was not aware of your being here."

"Is that all? You are not nervous, I hope. Are you not recovered from the fatigue of your journey? You look more tired than when you came yesterday."

"It is nothing but want of sleep, I believe."

"You are a bad traveler if you can not sleep in a strange place; in Rosedale, too, where every one is so thoroughly at home. I always feel better here than any where else. Aunt Thorpe scolds me for it. Is there not a lovely view from that window?"

"Very beautiful!" he returned, without looking out. "You are better this morning?"

"Yes; sleep is my cure for headache—sleep, or a brisk gallop on the pony over the hills. You haven't seen my pony. We'll explore the country on horseback when we get home from Boston. Uncle Thorpe has a coal-black horse that will just suit you. He is both gentle and spirited. Cousin Charles, you are not hearing a word that I am saying."

"Yes, I hear every syllable. I shall be delighted to ride with you."

They were left alone while Lila assisted in preparing breakfast. He sat down by the window in silence, she anxiously observant of him.

"You look so grave and so unhappy, cousin Charles, so unlike yourself, that I am sure something has happened to disturb you."

"There has nothing happened, I assure you."

"Then why are you so sad—so silent?" she asked, coming to his side. "A bad night would never thus depress you."

He felt ashamed of the weakness that he could not control. Hot tears fell fast upon the pages of a review which he had taken from the table. He pressed his hands over his eyes and would have turned away, but she prevented him.

"Charles, dear Charles, you don't know how you frighten me!"

"I did not mean to alarm you. I am ashamed of being so childish. I was not prepared to meet you with composure. Let us forget it. You shall never again see in me such unmanly emotion."

"But there must have been a cause for it," she urged. "Not prepared to meet *me*? With composure? I do n't understand you. Tell me at once, cousin Charles, what is the matter. I shall tease you till you do," she added, playfully.

"It is your ill health, love. It is the fatal, final parting that is always to be dreaded."

"Not final, Charles," she whispered, softly; "there's eternity before us."

"It is the impossible idea of dragging on a weary existence without you," he continued, without replying to what she said. "O, Isabel, I can not have it so! My whole soul rebels against it!"

She did not reply at once, but he looked up into her face, and saw with awe the beautiful, serene smile upon her lips, and the calm, happy light in her eyes. There was not the slightest tremor in her voice when she replied :

"God will not permit us to have idols. He is a jealous God, and must be loved supremely. My life and all my interests are in his keeping. If I live, as I may for years, to be a comfort to you, and to brighten, as you think I can, your lot in life, or if I die to-day, I know that all will be ordered for the best. In either case, dear Charles, I can say with my whole heart, His will be done. If we would have peace, and be free from the harassing fears that you express, we must trust wholly in him—trust in his love and in his wisdom. How few and short are the years that will intervene before we meet in the better land, never to be parted any more! How swiftly the fleeting days hurry by! I often wonder how we can plan at all for this little span of life!"

"I can not feel as you do, Isabel. I feel, or rather I know, it must be true that God rules in righteousness; but

I feel no submission to his will when I think of your danger. Why was I permitted to know you, and why did you become so necessary to my happiness, if I were to lose you so soon? Since my aunt, last evening, spoke to me of your precarious health, I have been wretched. The whole universe seems wrapped in a funeral pall."

"You will feel differently when you are more accustomed to the idea. It is a great consolation to me that you are a Christian. Let us speak no more of earthly reunion, but of the happy reunion above. The fair, untroubled region where we hope to live is beyond the dark river. O, it matters little, Charles, how soon we cross over, if we are but ready to go! I used to shrink back from the thought of death; I could not disconnect it from the dark, cold grave; but for months now I've had no fear—no fear!"

Her calm voice insensibly soothed him. He saw her standing there, living and beautiful; and, in spite of her own assurance, the fond idea again took possession of his mind that the danger had been exaggerated. By the time that breakfast was over he had persuaded himself that all her friends were needlessly alarming themselves, and was almost angry with the resolution that every one seemed to have taken to limit the fair girl's days.

"If she were not so good, so superior to all others," he thought, with a lover's one-sided partiality, as he listened to her cheerful voice, "the village gossips would have frightened her to death with their gloomy forebodings."

While Lila took her long music lesson that was to last till her teacher's return, he retired to patch up his night's rest. When he came down again Isabel was sketching the flowers in the marble vase on the mantle. She complimented him on his improved appearance, playfully asking him if he were sure that it was himself who had brought such a dismal face down to the breakfast-table. He sat down by her side to watch the progress of the drawing, and to hold and point her pencils. He offered to mix her colors, but she preferred her own skill to his. When it

was finished, and the brushes and pencils were put up, they all went into the garden, and he was entertained for an hour with the unabridged history of every shrub and flower on the premises.

After dinner the girls played duets and sang together; and when they were tired Isabel lay on the lounge, and Lila busied herself with some intricate stitch of embroidery for grandma's new cap, while Charles read aloud.

How quickly the day passed! Day long to be remembered, to be looked back upon in the years to come with tearful eyes, as the last happy season of their sweet, sisterly intercourse! How soon it was time for Isabel to return home! Affectionate but playful adieus were interchanged, and Lila took charge of Nero at the request of his gentle mistress, who observed, laughingly, that if she ran away he might be retained as a parting gift.

"I must hurry you home, Belle," said Charles, as he wrapped her shawls about her. "As long as people will persist in calling you an invalid we must keep you from the night air. Look at her, aunt Mary," he added, triumphantly, "is she not a picture of health?"

Grandma Clare shook her head mournfully.

"They're all jealous of the roses on your cheek, Belle. Let us hurry away before they infect us with their gloom. Good-by, little cousin Lila. You will be sorry that you refused to go with us."

They drove away smiling, throwing kisses and waving adieus till they were out of sight. The rich, red evening in the west betokened a bright to-morrow. When the twilight faded, and the stars came out, one by one, and smiled peacefully upon the trees, now crowned with their light Spring foliage, or peeped at their own likeness in the happy little brook, there seemed something in the placid beauty of the scene below akin to the silent loveliness of their azure homes in the depths of the distant sky. There was not a cloud to foreshadow the fast-coming sorrow. Lila sat till very late at her window enjoying the quietude of the hour.

It was very strange, she thought, that as soon as she was alone she could think of nothing but what was in some way connected with Gerald. She had often sat in the same spot and imagined all sorts of improbabilities in reference to her absent father, but to-night, even when she forced herself to remember the perils and dangers to be encountered in strange countries or on the restless ocean, she found herself wondering if Gerald were lonely; if he missed her society and thought lovingly about her; or if he were already contented to live far from the tranquil shades of Rosedale.

The loud snoring of Irish Mat in his room at length aroused her, and, shutting her door to get rid of a part of the nasal anthem which was swelling up and down the long stairway, and shrieking dolefully in the corners of the hall, she strove to still her busy thoughts, and to compose herself to sleep. But the more she courted sleep the more it would n't come. She repeated all the hymns and psalms she knew, she counted hundreds and thousands as monotonously as possible; for an hour she numbered fictitious sheep jumping over an imaginary stone wall, and was rather interested than otherwise in the crowds of sham wool-wearers that passed under review. They came thicker and faster till she was bewildered with the endless hurried procession. Then she tried to manufacture acrostics upon the most perverse letters of the alphabet, but she found nothing to tire her fancy or to induce sleep even in this most wearisome of all employments. All her experiments resulted in leaving her in a decidedly wide-awake condition.

All this time was fair Isabel lying cold and dead upon the sofa in her sleeping apartment. In the adjoining chamber Charles Russell was quietly sleeping, making up for the broken and disturbed sleep of the previous night. Resolutely discarding, as a baseless chimera, his aunt's kindly warning of the coming evil, he lay with the shadow of that evil already upon him, dreaming only of peace and joy.

There was a sweet smile upon the beautiful face of the

dead girl, as she lay half-undressed upon her couch ; an unwonted rapt expression of countenance, as if a vision of the glories to which she was hastening were granted before the willing spirit took its upward flight.

The pen may not linger to delineate the mournful surprise of the morning, or the keen agony that wrung the hearts of the sorrowing friends.

She was removed to New York, and interred in the cemetery at Greenwood. It was a long time before Charles Russell recovered from this unexpected blow. He seemed absolutely stunned by its severity, and for several weeks—which were passed at Rosedale because he could not bear to leave those who had known and loved her—his grief was at times so intense as to excite much alarm among his friends lest his mind should become permanently injured by it. Lila hushed her own bitter sorrow that she might administer comfort to him. The death of Isabel had also opened afresh the wound in the hearts of the old couple, and, by recalling the memory of the mute child, rendered them wholly unfit to cheer and console their suffering nephew.

Lila felt herself sinking under the multiplied cares and labors that now pressed heavily upon her. She sometimes thought that cousin Charles was a trifle selfish in his grief, for he was unwilling that she should leave him to perform the necessary labors of the household.

“Do n’t leave me, Lila,” he would say, “let the work go. Of what consequence is it now ? Sit down here and speak to me of Isabel, my beautiful, lost Isabel !”

At last Lila wrote to aunt Ruth, and, after giving her a short account of the state of affairs, prayed for a short visit from the old lady. “Come, if possible, for my sake,” she wrote, “for I am in great need of your counsel and sympathy.”

In less than a week after Lila had mailed her letter she was gladdened by seeing the kind, cordial face and encouraging smile of aunt Ruth in their midst. She brought the

same cheerful spirit, the same hopeful piety with her that had made her former visit so delightful. Charles seemed to be aroused by some magic influence, and, without opposition, suffered himself to be consigned to the care of a gentleman in Boston for a tour among the White Mountains in New Hampshire. Aunt Ruth arranged every thing, even packing his portmanteau and engaging his place in the stage.

"You hurry me away as if you were heartily tired of me," he said, as she accompanied him to the village to take the coach.

"I am in a hurry to know that you are more like yourself, less thoughtful of your sorrows, and more determined to rise above them. A few hard scrambles up those rough steeps in New Hampshire will free you from this deathlike lethargy and make you of some use in the world."

"Ah, aunt, the world has lost all its pleasures and charms for me!"

"Your responsibilities are not at all lessened. You still owe duties to others, and while your parents live, Charles, you must not forget their claims on their only son. It is your first great trial. Bear up bravely, bear it submissively, and you will soon find that the world is not wholly devoid of real happiness."

"I do not desire to be happy again, aunt."

"That is to say, you take pleasure in being a gloomy, joyless misanthrope, and that you mean to enjoy nothing because God has taken your idol. Is such a feeling right, Charles? Can you feel that God approves it? O, could our sweet friend, from her happy home in heaven, now speak to you, would she not entreat you to think and feel differently? Not such the feelings that actuated her gentle bosom. For her sake, Charles, be a man again. If she is permitted to behold you, let her not see the character she so loved and admired tarnished by selfish regret and unmanly misanthropy."

"I will try, aunt, to become all you wish. Write to me

often, and beg Lila to do so, and do not forget me at the throne of grace.”

Without attracting his notice, aunt Ruth drove down a back street, so as to avoid passing Esquire Thorpe’s residence; and coming to the tavern just as the stage arrived, he had only time to get on board before it drove rapidly away.

Aunt Ruth was shocked at first by the change in farmer Clare and his wife. They were quite childish at times, especially Mrs. Clare, who seemed less able to encounter trouble than her husband. She saw and appreciated Lila’s devotion to them as it deserved. She soon made up her mind to spend the Summer at Rosedale. Now that Charles was gone, Lila made no allusion to her dead friend. She chose only cheerful subjects of conversation, and a stranger might have deemed her unfeeling. But Nero, now her own, was petted in every possible way. The only expression of her grief was in the lines that she sent to Gerald the day after Isabel’s death:

“Alas! she is dead!
She died as the fair June roses die,
As the sunset pales on the evening sky,
When the day has fled.

O, say can it be?
For the sunbeams dance on the sanded floor,
And the young birds sing by the open door,
How merrily!

Could the glad, green dells
So smile if her eyes were closed in death—
If she came no more o’er the dewy heath
To the flowering bells?

Like the stars’ still light
Was the beautiful calm of her azure eye,
As she softly whispered her last ‘good-by’
But yesternight.

’T was but yesterday
That she sketched, with her own unstudied grace,
The flowers that droop in the marble vase
On the mantle gray.

Then lingered long
Her snowy hand 'mid the dulcet keys,
While her rich voice gave to the list'ning breeze
Its gush of song.

Hark! hark! hear it swell!
On the mountains hoar, down the long defiles,
'Mid the rustling leaves of the forest aisles,
Her sad death-knell!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"O, blow ye westlin' winds, blow soft
Among the leafy trees."

"I AM going to spend the Summer here, Mary," said aunt Ruth. "I've tried to devise some better plan for you, but I can think of nothing as yet."

"What could be better, or so pleasant, Ruth?" asked the old lady. "Why, Lila will be beside herself with joy."

"It is partly on her account that I propose to stay. She has too many cares, and altogether too much work to do. And poor Isabel's death, though she says nothing about it, has been a great shock to her. Last night I was awake for hours, listening to her unconscious murmuring in her sleep. She would ask questions about her music in her old, light way, and almost immediately would begin to lament her teacher's early death. Even in her sleep she would burst into tears, and moan and sigh as if her heart were breaking. All day long, Mary, she hides this emotion from us. She is so thoughtful of you and John, so fearful of your being distressed that she is really acting a part all the time."

"I thought, sister Ruth, that she had been of late uncommonly playful and merry. John and I have both noticed it, and wondered how it was that, in listening to her, we could so easily forget our sorrows and feel so cheerful."

"Notwithstanding this, I am sure, Mary, that the grief that she so resolutely hides from us, and the unusual care and labor that she so willingly undertakes for your sake, is seriously affecting her health."

There was an expression of almost childish helplessness

in the appealing look that grandma Clare raised to her sister's face.

"What can we do, Ruth? I would take all the care of the housekeeping just as I did formerly, but somehow, I don't know why, I am continually forgetting what should be done, and nothing would go right if the child did not attend to it. She thinks of every thing. I dare say that she thinks a great deal about Isabel; but young folks get over these things easily. If you can only stay a few months, till she gets used to Gerald's absence, she will do nicely."

"I am going to write to my Irish girl, Bridget, to shut up the house in Boston and to come to me here. She is used to hard work. Then I am going to send Lila to Mr. Lewis's for a month. Bless me, Mary, what a long face!"

"Not a month, Ruth! A week will do very well for a change."

"Well, well, we'll see about that. When Bridget arrives I will, with your leave, Mary, take Lila's place for a time, and relieve her as well as yourself of the care of the household. I shall pay Bridget's wages just as if we had remained at home. I hope you have no objection to my plan, for I am going to write by this afternoon's mail. You like it, don't you?"

"John will object to your paying Bridget for doing our work; and, as likely as not, he will not permit Lila to go away."

"I will manage him, Mary. We'll say nothing about the girl's wages at present. Till she arrives we will say nothing to Lila. Is Zeno Bradford at home now?"

"Yes; he will soon leave again, however; his vacation, I believe, is nearly over."

"So he did not study with Gerald?"

"Only a short time; not over a fortnight, I should think. Gerald remained feeble so long after his illness that farmer Bradford thought best to send him away to school. Isn't it strange that his mother still avoids us?"

"Not very."

"She is proud of Zeno now. She even speaks of his talents in society, as if every body did n't know how meanly she has treated him. Then she actually hates our Lila, and is forever insinuating that there is something lacking in the dear girl's intellect. I think she will get tired of talking in this manner, for our village people, who understand her spite, often, in defiance of politeness, laugh in her face when they hear her ill-natured observations. Sometimes they ask if she has forgotten the picnic."

"And what does Lila herself say to all this?"

"Well, Ruth, if you'll believe it, she actually seems to pity the old hag. She says, 'You know, grandma, how vexed and mortified we should have felt had we been in her place, poor woman!' As if there were a possibility of our getting into so mean a place! Lie down, Nero! Do you miss your little mistress? She is n't lost. Can't you hear her steps overhead? She is doing the chamber work. Lie down and be quiet."

Thus assured, Nero returned to his mattress under the lounge.

"There was never a dog like that, Ruth," said grandma. "Why, I can reason with him almost as if he were human. He understands, I think, that Isabel is dead, and he is uneasy if Lila is out of sight. Dogs know a great deal more than people think."

"Has he forgotten his old antipathy to Mat?"

"Not he. Mat spends a great deal of time in coaxing him, but it does no good. He will not take food from him, and as to caresses he'll not permit him to smooth a hair on his back. There comes Mat now with a bone for him. You may see how he will receive it."

Mat opened the door and whistled, and was immediately replied to by a long growl from beneath the lounge. Attracted, however, by the scent of the meat, Nero crept lazily from his bed, and, advancing a few steps toward the door, sat down and contemplated, with the most surly looks of

which a dog is capable, the tempting bait that Mat held up before him.

"Coom, Nero, darlint!"

Nero growled fearfully.

"Coom, that 's a jewel! Nero, honey, coom, my boy!"

Nero snapped his teeth and barked in a fury of rage, all the time eying with wistful looks the bone that Mat held in his hand.

"Bad luck to ye!" said Mat, whose patience had now lasted as long as usual; "ye're an unforgivin' baste! Them must forgive as expects to get forgiven, shure. An' will ye niver forget the nate thrick I sarved ye? Och! an' have n't I tould ye, an' if I jammed yer feelin's, sorry am I? Whin I own up to the mane thing and ax yer pardon, why can't ye lave it alone?"

Nero seemed to be so much impressed by this speech that Mat ventured a step nearer and stooped to caress him; but he only provoked a renewal of the growls and barks for a moment silenced.

"O, thin," said Mat, retreating in great wrath, "divil take ye, to be shure! An' ye're not the illigant baste I took ye for!"

"Where are you going, Fairy?" asked grandma, as Lila came in with a sun bonnet and a pair of gardening gloves in her hand. Nero came bounding to her side, almost throwing her down in his joy at the idea of going out with her.

"Mrs. Thorpe has sent me a white rose bush, grandma. She knew that I wanted to get one, and she procured it at Elm Hill when she was last in New York. The gardener was not at home to take it up when she was there, and it was sent out yesterday."

"I thought we had white roses already."

"This is a climber, grandma. It is a rare kind I believe, but very hardy. The green leaves are deeply indented, and very dark and glossy."

"You are not strong enough, my dear, to plant it properly. Wait for grandpa to help you."

"Mat is going to help."

"Where will you put it? The yard is full now."

"I shall find a place. We have room for many beautiful things about the house yet."

She went out singing lightly, but was silent as soon as she was out of hearing. She planted the rose so as to wreath the white marble stone that marked Nellie's last resting-place.

"In another year, Mat, it will look beautiful. You see these trees that stand so near together, that in the afternoon cast such lovely shadows over the grave? Do n't you think, Mat, that you and I could contrive a seat under them—a seat facing the grave, low and easy, with the back of open work, made of twisted twigs? The ivy from this oak could be trained across it, and over it too, if we had a latticed hood for it to cling to, and we could bring slips of the flowering runners to plant beside it. Would n't it be charming, Mat?"

Mat's eyes and mouth were agape with amazement as this vision of beauty was so rapidly unfolded before him. He said nothing, but stared with all his might into her face as she continued:

"It would be such a pleasant place to come to with my work or my books; it would be such a nice place to write in, or to sing or dream in; and it would n't seem then as if we had left dear Nellie alone. Would it, Mat?"

"O, thin, miss, I will do whatever ye plaze; but the thoct of all this bothers me intirely. An' what do ye want at the first?"

"Nothing just now, Mat; but next week, if you have any time to spare, I'll show you."

"Faith, miss, let me tell ye a betther way, for the matther o' that. There's young Masther Bradford just dying to oblege ye. An' he's yer mon, shure. He'll know what ye mane. Sorrow a bit can I mind o' it, savin' a quare

picter o' it, finished and done. Barrin' the contrevance o' the same, I'm the lad as will dig for ye, an' fetch for ye, an ye want the last shoot o' grass in the medder."

"Yes, I know you are always willing to do all I require."

"For the rest just spake to the young masther; he's the lad ye want."

"To be sure!" said Lila, clapping her hands. "I wonder I did n't think of him. I will speak to him to-night, and we will do it directly. Do n't mention it in the house till we get it done."

"They'll be after seein' us at work, miss."

"Perhaps not. It will not take long. Hush, Nero! Mat is your friend now. Why can't you believe it?"

Nero wagged his tail submissively, and licked her hand, but his mistrust of Irish Mat was not at all lessened, and he swallowed several half-made growls as he slowly followed them back to the house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“Yet more! the billows and the depths have more!
High hearts and brave are gathered to thy breast!
They hear not now the booming waters’ roar—
The battle thunders will not break their rest;
Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave!
Give back the true and brave!”

THERE were no changes in the household economy at Rosedale till the arrival of Bridget. Then Lila was surprised to learn that Mr. Lewis and his family, including Gerald, were expecting to see her immediately at Elm Hill.

Allan’s reply to aunt Ruth’s letter was shown to her. In it he expressed the greatest pleasure in anticipation of her visit, and said, in conclusion, that he meant to gratify her taste for music as soon as she was able to enjoy it, by inviting to his house all the musical amateurs of his acquaintance. And when each had done their best, he knew, he said, whose charming voice and exquisite expression would throw them all in the shade.

“O, dear aunt,” exclaimed Lila, with a frightened look of amazement upon her face, “I can not go! I dare not. See what he expects of me! I shall be sure to disappoint and mortify him. What evil spirit ever put into his head such a mistaken idea of my musical powers? Indeed, aunty, I can not go!”

“Nonsense! You are too timid. Of course he will not oblige you to sing. Not but that you will try to please him if he insists. He understands your genius better than you do, and will not expose you to any trial that you are unequal to. You must get rid of some of this morbid sensitiveness, my dear. You can be quite as shy and retiring

as is proper, without feeling so uncomfortable if you are noticed a little."

"I feel frightened, aunt, when I think of going alone. It seems a trifle to you because you are used to it, but I have never been a mile in the cars without some acquaintance to accompany me."

"Zeno is going back to school, and he will be your traveling companion till you leave the stage, and he will attend to your baggage and buy your ticket. Gerald or Mr. Lewis will meet you in the city, so you will have no care of yourself at all, only to keep a bright look-out on the road for interesting items to make up your first letter home."

"Yes, aunty. But do you really think I ought to leave home? Am I not needed here? Are grandma and grandpa perfectly willing? They went out directly when you began to tell me."

"Of course they are willing. They think my portly person can very well shoulder all your cares. In the evening we shall listen to Mat and Bridget for entertainment."

"O, aunt," said Lila, laughing, "isn't it fun to hear them jabber? Your Bridget shows in her looks such supreme contempt for poor Mat, and his assumed importance is so comical!"

"She is a Protestant, Lila, and he a Catholic. That is the bone of contention between them. She despises him, and he resents it. This morning she called him an ignorant 'Papist,' and he returned the compliment by addressing her as a 'bastely hiritic divil, shure!'"

"She must not be allowed, dear aunt, to make him discontented. Grandpa can't do without him. And he is really good and obliging when one is kind to him."

"I will see that they do not quarrel. Now, my dear, just dismiss all your family cares for a season, and make recreation your business while you are absent."

"I can't make it seem that I am going. I must pack my trunk, I suppose, to-night. Are you sure, aunty, that I am going to-morrow?"

"Do not hurry yourself. There is plenty of time. Remember to pack heavy clothing as well as light, for almost every other day is cold enough for a cloak. There are many young girls," continued kind, garrulous aunt Ruth, "who seem to have no proper ideas of suitable clothing. If they pay a visit in Summer, they never consider our variable climate, but, as it is the season for muslin and laces, they take with them only butterfly plumage. They start on a warm, sunny day, and perhaps for the first twenty-four hours congratulate themselves on having turned a deaf ear to cautious mammas and particular old maids like myself. Then comes a biting north-easter, or a cold snap after a thunder-shower, on the very day perhaps that they had selected for some long-anticipated excursion; their friends, thickly clad, are not going to be cheated out of their pleasure by the freaks of the weather, and the young visitors, in all their limp gossamer finery, go too. Take time for reflection, Lila," said aunt Ruth, "and remember the weather."

Lila got along very well for a young traveler till the last hour of her journey. There were some Swiss singers in the car who had been performing at different country places. There were seven of them. They occupied two seats nearly opposite to Lila, and entertained the passengers gratis with a number of their National melodies. They sung in their own language, which of course was a strange jargon to American ears, seeming, like a baby's first attempt to talk, to have no meaning, but the airs they sung were wild and sweet, and our young friend forgot that she was solitary and weary while she listened to them. They got out at a way station, singing as they left the cars, and continuing their song on the platform in front of the depot till the train was out of hearing.

Then it began to grow dark and the lamps were lighted. This only made the outer world more indistinct, while it seemed to increase the shadowy gloom inside. Lila's imagination was far from being inactive. She felt lonely and frightened as the landscape darkened. Although aunt Ruth

had assured her that there was no grace for borrowed trouble, the poor child already began to cower before the needless fears and numberless apprehensions that presented themselves, uncalled for, to her timid vision—so strong always to endure *real* evil, to overcome *real* trials, yet trembling with fright before imaginary ones.

The cars seemed to go much faster since it was dark ; they made her dizzy with their quickened motion ; she was sure some accident must result from such reckless haste. The dismal shriek of the steam-whistle sounded like the diabolical yell of some fiend, who was whisking them all rapidly away to certain destruction.

She held on to her seat with both hands, and trembled with terror. The cars became crowded as they neared the city, and a new fear took possession of her. What if something should happen to prevent any one from meeting her when the cars should arrive ! In the crowd and confusion what would become of her !

The train slackened its speed as it approached its destination, and many of the passengers, seizing such light articles as carpet-bags, valises, and umbrellas, left their seats and stood jostling and crowding each other in the passage. The cars went very slow now, but the crowding and pushing of the passengers became more earnest. Some of them, wholly out of patience with the slow progress made by steam, jumped from the platform and undertook to complete their journey on foot, and were obliged to run like race-horses to keep along side. At another time Lila would have laughed at this, but she was too much frightened to do so now. Presently the outside clamor of the hackmen fell on her ear, and through the window she saw men hurrying about with lanterns in their hands. Some one from behind touched her shoulder, and she started up and screamed with affright. It was Gerald, who had hardly waited for the train to stop before he began to pass through the mass of impatient people who were seeking egress.

He laughed at her terror, and sat down easily by her side to wait for the crowd to disperse.

"Let us hurry out, Gerald," said Lila, without returning his warm greeting.

He laughed again as she stood up with her carpet-bag, and umbrella, and parasol closely clasped in her hands, and unconsciously endeavored to pass him.

"You are frightened, Lila," he said, as he drew her down to her seat again. "See! this is the terminus of the road; the cars won't take us any further if we sit here till morning. There is no danger of our not getting out at the right place, and we can move at our leisure. Let me take this light baggage."

Just then the light went out and left them in total darkness. The tumult and confusion increased as each passenger sturdily elbowed the unfortunates on either side.

"They make me think of Sterne's starling," said Gerald, laughing still at the most unnecessary delay, caused by the American hurry and impatience; "they want to get out as badly as the poor bird did, and they don't seem to succeed much better."

"O, Gerald," said Lila, clinging to his arm, "take me out of this dreadful place! What will become of us?"

"There is no danger, my dear sister."

"But why are we waiting?"

"If we wait a moment we can go without being crowded. Cousin Allan's coach is waiting for us. I thought you were a veteran traveler, Lila. After going to Ohio, to get frightened at a little bustle and pushing like this is hardly the thing to be expected."

"I was stronger then, Gerald," said Lila, resuming her usual composed manner, "and I did n't travel alone."

"Now you begin to look natural. There! the way is clear at last. Come, sister."

When they were seated in the carriage, and the coachman was driving rapidly away, Lila ventured to dismiss her anxieties wholly, and turned with some curiosity to

observe if any changes had taken place in the appearance of her companion since they last parted. The light of the carriage lamps shone full in his face. The same brotherly look and manner; the same dark, handsome eyes and loving smile; the same affectionate tone and the old endearing interest in her comfort expressed in all. Unchanged yet.

"Are you tired, Fairy, love? Were you ill in the cars? Have you had any thing to eat? O, Lila, I can not tell how glad I am to see you again!"

Yes, thank Heaven, unchanged yet! Lila could not reply. Seeing him recalled too forcibly the happy hours spent with their dear, lost friend at Rosedale. She remembered how bright and cheerful Isabel had been at the time of Gerald's departure, and how soon she had been called to mourn for her sudden death. He seemed to divine her thoughts.

"I went with cousin Allan to her funeral, Lila. It seemed impossible to realize even there that she was dead. Her spirit seemed to linger and speak in the sweet, holy smile upon her lips. There was none of that rigidity of feature that we generally observe on the faces of the dead. She looked as if she were tranquilly sleeping. But I thought more of you, sister, than of her, and you will not chide me now if I tell you that the thought of your increased loneliness made me unhappy."

"Cousin Charles was so miserable that I had little leisure to think of my own sorrow. He was always so sure, poor fellow, that he could never be happy again, that I was often at a loss how to console him. He made no effort to rise above his grief, but seemed to find a strange sort of luxury in indulging it. He was never weary of telling me over and over again that his loss was irreparable, and that the world had nothing now to offer worthy of a thought. It was a wrong feeling, I know, Gerald," she added, looking timidly up into his face, "but I could n't help feeling relieved and glad when aunt Ruth, in her kind, resolute manner, sent him so suddenly away. She planned his journey before she left Boston."

"Aunt Ruth is worth her weight in gold. She wrote to us how much you had endured, and how closely your own sorrow was hidden that you might comfort others. She told us too of your ill health, and gave us a needless charge to be careful of the Fairy of Rosedale. We must coax back your natural cheerfulness, and dismiss the artificial counterpart that you have lately worn instead."

"But when I think of Isabel and the others that we have loved and lost, and of the uncertainty that hangs over the fate of my lost father, I seem lately to lose my self-control, and—and"—

"Hush! You must not cry so. They are together in heaven, our darling Nellie and Isabel. Do you remember how you comforted me, and said it was for the best that my beautiful sister should die? O, Lila, I can not tell you how bitter the trial was! But what you said was true, for it led me to seek *His* favor whose rod had fallen so heavily upon me."

She drew nearer to him and closely clasped the hand that held hers.

"Yes, Lila; even I, who had so long resisted your affectionate entreaties to be reconciled to God, and had often felt vexed and half angry with aunt Ruth because of her pious counsel and prayers, even I, humbled at last by my affliction and my loss, was brought, through God's boundless mercy, to the foot of the Cross. May it not be intended for our good, Lila dear, when those who are so meet for heaven, to whom death is eternal gain, are taken from us?"

Lila's face was radiant with smiles now.

"It makes me very happy, Gerald, to hear you say this. I have prayed constantly for this one blessing; and Isabel too—how often has she spoken to me of her concern for you! If there was joy in heaven, dear Gerald, as the Bible says, do you not think our beloved ones were sharers in it? But why did you not write of this change?"

"I was about to do so, when aunt Ruth's letter proposing your visit came, and I concluded to wait till I saw you."

"Ah, Gerald, how much I have feared that the faults so manifest in me, a professed follower of the Savior, should repel you from the right way!"

"You are as earnest as ever in underrating yourself. I will tell you what I did think of you."

"Don't, if you please."

"Well, there's hardly time, sister, for we have turned into the avenue. See, how the light in the house shines on the trees! There is cousin Allan on the steps awaiting us. Let me help you out instead of him."

But cousin Allan had the door open and the steps down before Gerald stopped speaking, and not only lifted Lila out of the carriage, but carried her in his arms up the broad stone steps into the hall. Here Mrs. Lewis met her and gave her a cordial welcome to Elm Hill, at the same time conducting her into the light, pleasant drawing-room. There were no stiff ceremonial forms to go through with—no chilling etiquette to freeze the young visitor's blood, or to make her feel like an intruder; but Mrs. Lewis herself accompanied her to her room, and assisted in changing her traveling dress.

When they came down stairs again tea was brought into the room for her on a little tray. This was Gerald's doing. He knew, he said, in answer to Mrs. Lewis's pleasant remonstrance, that his sister would enjoy it better there, with him to wait on her, than to sit at the table alone and be attended by servants.

Lila soon grew cheerful. Mr. Lewis, with his usual tact, led the conversation to pleasant themes, and Edith seemed, in her natural, cordial manner, to forget that the young girl was yet a stranger in her house. There was a diffident grace in Lila's behavior at first that was extremely becoming, but when after a time, reassured by their kind attentions, she resumed the playful, habitual ease of her manner at home, Edith was charmed with her.

"She is the most winning creature I ever saw," she remarked to her husband, when they had retired to their

room. "Her laugh and the tones of her voice are perfect music ; and her manners are grace itself."

"But she is not handsome, Edith."

"Why, no," replied Edith, slowly, as if considering the thought presented ; "not exactly handsome, perhaps. I declare I did not think of it though. But she is—she is—bewitching. She is not a beauty, certainly, but, Allan, how charming were the endless changes of expression on her face this evening ! I could not keep my eyes off her a moment."

"You laughed at my strong interest in her, you will please to recollect."

"Yes, I thought it very strange. It must be a beautiful mind that so lights up and adorns such plain features."

"There is nothing repulsive in her looks—nothing unpleasant. Her features are not coarse, Edith."

"On the contrary, she is so delicate and fragile as to seem almost spiritual. Unconsciousness is her chief charm. Don't you think so ? She has n't an idea that she is attractive ; that is plain from her whole manner. You may stop laughing, if you please, sir. I am not more interested than yourself."

"You must hear her sing, Edith."

"Gerald had a fit of rapture last evening while describing her appearance when improvising a song. I must own I did think he exaggerated her abilities, and I told him he was a little wild ; but I expect he was right."

"Does your uncle come to-morrow ?"

"Yes ; so he said in his note."

"I am sorry that I must be absent an hour or two ; I have an engagement at eleven. However, I can trust you, my dear, to entertain him while I am gone."

"He always entertains himself alone in the library. He is glad of an opportunity to be there by himself. You need not hurry back on his account. I dare say he would spend the whole day alone with pleasure."

"Not quite so bad as that, Edith. Captain Rosé knows

when he gets hold of a rare book, and he is one of the few that can appreciate my collection. Is he going to sea again?"

"I do not know; I have n't seen him yet. But I do know," said Edith, as she pushed back her luxuriant hair and tied a little Quaker night-cap snugly over it, "that I am sleepy. He is coming in the morning, his note says, which means an hour before we get up. Now be silent, if you please, or I shall drop asleep in the middle of your next sentence. How old is this gifted child?"

"I am silent, Edith, according to order."

"Ah, I forgot. Do n't sit up and read, please; and do n't rummage that toilet-stand," said Edith, raising herself on her elbow to watch him. "There is nothing there that you want. The paper is down stairs."

"I shall have to go down there and read it, my dear, if you are not quiet."

Edith was hardly so sleepy as she had imagined; for she lay a long time awake, watching her husband as he read, and thinking of the fair child who had so deeply interested her feelings.

It was very late the next morning when Lila awoke. The sun shone brightly through the open blinds, and lighted up the dial-plate of a small Italian time-piece on the mantle opposite the bed, and showed her that the hands pointed to nine o'clock. She got up immediately, and was hurriedly dressing herself, when the door softly opened and a little girl looked in.

"Come in, my dear; do n't be afraid," said Lila, observing that she hesitated.

"Mamma sent me to say good-morning," said the child, "and would you like to have Janet come up and help dress you?"

"No, thank you; I am accustomed to dress myself."

"Your name is Miss Wood, is n't it?"

"My name is Lila. It is only strangers who say Miss Wood. You will not be a stranger, I hope."

"Have you prayed this morning?" asked the child, now venturing nearer.

"No; you see I am not half dressed."

"I have prayed twice. First with mamma in her room, and then with papa, and cousin Gerald, and uncle Rose, and all the rest in the library. And Harry was naughty; he played with a string, and he is shut up because of it."

"Indeed! And who is uncle Rose? Do I know him?"

"Yes; every body knows uncle Rose. I knew him in a little time after he came to-day. When you have had breakfast I will show you my basket of shells and coral that he has brought. Mamma said I was not to tease you. Am I teasing you, cousin Lila?"

"O, no!"

"Ally Cory is down stairs. Do you know Ally Cory?" continued the little questioner.

"No; I think I have heard of her though."

"Is cousin Gerald your cousin?"

"Ada!" called a pleasant voice from the stairway before Lila could reply.

"I am coming, mamma. Shall you be down soon, Miss Lila?"

"Yes, in a few minutes."

She soon followed the child down stairs, and with some confusion apologized for her long sleep.

"You will feel better for it," said Mrs. Lewis, kindly. "Gerald has gone to Doctor Hamilton's, and Mr. Lewis is away on business, and I, unfortunately, have much to occupy me this morning. Do you think, my dear, that you can entertain yourself for an hour or two after you have breakfasted?"

"O, yes, ma'am! Can I go to the library?"

"You can go wherever you please in the house. You will not get lost, although you will find the rooms oddly arranged. Ada will show you the way to the library when you are ready."

Edith had forgotten that her uncle had chosen to remain

in the library after morning prayers, and that he had coaxed the children with pyramids of confectionery to refrain from disturbing him till dinner-time. Left alone, he had carried a pile of his favorite authors into a deep window recess, and, arranging the heavy curtains so as to screen him from the observation of any one who might inadvertently intrude, he gave himself up to a few hours' forgetfulness of all surrounding objects.

Lila came into the room so softly that it did not rouse him. She stole on tiptoe round the apartment, with her hands clasped behind her, as if she feared to disturb the genius of the place. The arrangement of the room, its studious aspect and its softened light, suited her taste, and she thought it would be pleasant to spend a lifetime in its sweet, quiet retirement. At last she drew near to the organ. The manual of the instrument was open, and she sat down timidly to try its chords. The thought of being perfectly alone inspired her with confidence, and the fine tones soon awakened all her musical enthusiasm, and she played many of her favorite airs without mistake or embarrassment. Presently she began to sing and to improvise a simple but appropriate accompaniment to the beautiful melody that, in its utterance of long-repressed emotion, seemed to fall unconsciously from her lips. It was at first a sad and mournful song, for her dead teacher was the theme. Gradually, however, as the music went on, her thoughts were elevated to the bright world where the beloved one was at rest, and the obedient instrument seemed to shake with its pæan of sacred joy and triumph.

At last she started up and looked anxiously around. Her eyes sparkled with excitement and her cheek glowed with beautiful confusion as she thought of the possibility of having an auditor. The breathless stillness of the apartment reassured her, but she did not play or sing again. After examining the flowers on the mantle she left the room as quietly as she had entered.

"Well," said Captain Rose, drawing a long breath as

the door closed, "this is what I call an angel's visit. Jupiter! what a voice! And what a song it was!"

He came out from the recess and began to walk up and down the room. He had a bluff, hearty face, but it wore now a strange, perplexed expression.

"I believe I have seen that girl before. Where did she come from? She wasn't here to breakfast. She seems quite at home. I'll go down and ask Edith." He went hurriedly to the door, but turning back as quickly he added: "No, I won't. I will finish my book, for I shall get no other opportunity. Who can she be, or who is it that she reminds me of?"

He did not succeed in again losing himself among the pages, for his thoughts continually reverted to Lila's familiar features, and he sat puzzling himself about her till the dinner-bell rang. Only Mr. Lewis and his wife were in the dining-room when he went down, but Lila came in directly with Gerald, and was introduced to him. She started back, and her cheek crimsoned. He held her hand tightly and looked steadily into her face.

"Is she a relative of yours, Edith?" he asked, turning to his niece, who was regarding him with wonder. "Her face is strangely familiar."

"No, uncle; it is a fancy of yours. Sailors are often fanciful. I am sure that you never saw her before. Let her sit down, if you please. Your blunt manner, so pleasant to us, confuses her. Do not mind him, Lila."

"I am very glad," stammered Lila, "to see you again."

"There, Miss Edith!" cried the captain triumphantly; "I was sure that I knew her. You see she knows me too. Will you tell me, young lady, where we have met before?"

Lila glanced at Gerald. The curious, conscious expression of his face, as he stood regarding the old gentleman, amused her so that she could not refrain from smiling.

"I should recognize that smile any where," exclaimed the captain; "if you please, miss, just tell me where I have *seen it before.*"

"Do you recollect that, a long time ago, seven or eight years, I think it must be, you bought some roses for a child whose Spring flowers had been torn to pieces by a monkey—whose flowers, dear sir, had been gathered for her mother, who was dying."

"Yes, indeed! And you are that poor child. I see it now; I know all about it."

"But you do not know, sir," said Lila, with great earnestness, "how beautiful the roses were to the sick woman, or how long they kept fresh in that poor room, or how she prayed for the blessing of God to rest upon you because of your kindness."

"Well, well, the roses were very pretty, I dare say. Let us say no more about them, my dear. He! he!" laughed the captain. "Let me ask *you* a question. Do *you* remember the boy who brought the roses for you? I've thought of him oftener than of you, my dear; because I did n't get a chance to pay him. It is so droll to feel indebted to such a dirty little rascal. Did you ever see him afterward?"

Lila looked at Gerald, and laughed aloud. His brow was crimson.

"There he stands! There he is, sir!"

Mr. Lewis and his wife, beginning at last to comprehend the scene, burst into a laugh, and Gerald laughed too, though not so heartily. The confusion of the captain was comical enough. A ludicrous mingling of penitence and mirth overspread his fine, open countenance.

"Are you as independent as ever, my lad?" he asked, clapping Gerald cordially on the shoulder. "I shall despair of ever paying the old debt unless you are altered. It was so funny, Edith. All mud from head to foot, and as haughty in his bearing as a king!"

Captain Rose, and Gerald, and Lila were each obliged to tax their memories to the utmost in recalling the particulars of their transient acquaintance before Edith professed herself satisfied. They had nearly finished dinner when the conversation took a new direction.

"Have you been over the grounds, Captain Rose," asked Mr. Lewis.

"No, I have not been out of doors since breakfast. The weather is so charming, I am almost ashamed to own it. I am going to cruise over your whole domain this afternoon, Lewis."

"My gardener has made a variety of improvements this Spring, and I have purchased the fine, open park back of the garden. We must have the benefit of your taste, Fairy, in laying it out."

He laughed at her surprised look when he said this.

"You do not mean to have neighbors near enough to be troublesome," continued the captain. "Well, I like that. But I see that people are building all around you. The fine view from the east library window, that pleased me so much when I was here three years ago, is already spoiled. *Confound the cities, I say!* If there was n't room enough in the world, there would be some sense in crowding together like frightened sheep. But when thousands upon thousands of acres in our fertile West are unoccupied, it is too ridiculous to be crowded at every step by a heap of poverty-stricken beggars. Why, half the population in New York look as pinched and squalid as if they had never enjoyed a full meal in their lives. But I dare say you could n't hire them to leave—it is so pleasant to have the sides of their empty stomachs jammed together in a crowd."

He laughed at his own warmth.

"I found a book in your library, Lewis, this morning, portraying in pitiful language the privations of a sailor's life. I don't say the book was n't true; but why did n't the land-lubber who wrote it just mention the fact that out on the wide, blue sea there's a chance for a full-chested man to breathe. Privations indeed! He'd better turn his thoughts ashore. A sailor's life is the happiest in the world."

"A hard gale at sea must be delightful," said Edith.

"Well, my dear, in a certain sense it is. It wakes a

man up. He begins to find out a few of the powers that the Creator has given him. The sense of danger brings out his latent heroism. His nature acquires an affinity with what is sublime and beautiful. He knows that there never was and never will be any thing more glorious than the boundless sea. A sailor gets accustomed to taking large and comprehensive views of things. Who ever heard of a pinching, stingy, miserly sailor!"

"Ah, uncle, you are just as bad as ever, and it is needless to ask if you are going away again."

"Again, Edith! Of course I am. I am growing old, and my gray hair admonishes me that my race is nearly run. I can make but few more voyages, if I do my best. You do n't suppose that I am going to be tied, in my old age, to a strip of land, do you? The fact is, Edith," he continued, smiling as he observed Lila's surprise—"the fact is, I am too poetical for earth, and so I take to the water. I like what is sublime, and a thunder-storm in the tropics is my idea of sublimity."

"I have given up your case as hopeless long ago, uncle. I only hope you may not die in those far-away heathen regions. But if I knew any spell, dear uncle," added Edith affectionately, "that could detain you willingly in our midst, I would not hesitate to use it."

"Let me have the privilege of listening every day to such music as this morning filled the library," said the old gentleman with a meaning look at Lila, "and it will need no other spell to keep me here."

Lila raised one startled, beseeching look to his face, and rising from the table, hurriedly left the room."

"There! I've frightened her away. It is too bad. I ought to have known better."

"She is very shy and sensitive," said Mr. Lewis. "If there is a defect in her character, it is her extreme diffidence. I wonder how you induced her to sing to you."

"I did n't. She did n't know that I was there at all. Edith, my dear, just imagine your old uncle coiled up with

his books out of sight behind the curtain, forgetting the world and all that it contains, and suddenly recalled to earth by such music that he has to stop and reflect before he can persuade himself that his old ears are out of paradise. Why, Lewis, the way she sang and played for an hour is perfectly indescribable. Her whole soul was in it. It was unlike any thing I ever heard—a sort of lament for a dead friend, ending in a great burst of joy that the loved one was at rest. I pinched myself all over to make sure I was not dreaming. I shall be lame to-morrow in consequence. You should have heard it, Lewis,” said the old man rising from the table. “You pretend to considerable musical genius yourself, and it seems from your curious looks that I am the first discoverer of this child’s talent.”

“No, no, you are mistaken there. I have heard her sing and play; but none of us except Gerald have listened to any of her impromptu melodies. There is no doubt, captain, that she composed the piece you heard, and that accounts for her confusion and sudden departure. Gerald, my boy, you must look her up, and set her at ease.”

Thus commissioned, Gerald went in search of her. He found her sitting on a little rustic seat at the foot of the garden. There were traces of tears on her face, but she smiled and greeted him cheerfully as he approached.

“You will stay at home this warm afternoon, Gerald, will you not?”

“I shall come home early, but I must go for a few hours to Dr. Hamilton’s. You are not lonesome, I hope?”

“O, no; but I shall be happier when you are here. I wish, Gerald, I wish”—

“Well, sister, what is it? Shall I guess? You wish that Captain Rose was not here because he happened to be in the library this morning. But it would be hardly fair to send the kind old gentleman away for that offense.”

“I feel so ashamed, Gerald. He must think I am a sentimental little fool. Is he going away soon?”

“I do not know.”

"How grave you are! Have I displeased you, Gerald, or—or mortified you?"

"No; but it puzzles and disturbs me, Lila, that the rare, sweet gift that you possess, that is so charming to all your friends, and that has so delighted your old, kind friend this morning, should never be exercised without such annoyance and vexation to yourself. Why is it, Lila?"

She leaned her head on her hand and considered.

"I don't know; but indeed, Gerald, I can not help it. You can not think how it frightens me when a stranger overhears me as he did. The organ was so grand, and the room so shady and retired, like the green nooks in the woods at Rosedale; the shadows of our dear old trees at home seemed to fall around me, and I felt so much happier than I have done for a long time. I only meant to try the tones, Gerald, but I forgot; I never thought about its being bold or wrong."

"It was neither. There is nothing wrong except your dread of being heard. Think how much greater cause I had to start and run when the captain tried to make you recollect the 'ragged little rascal' who brought your flowers. I am not blaming you, dear; I don't believe you could do any thing unbecoming if you tried; but you must not, you really must not be so timid. There is the captain blaming himself for frightening you away—such a kind old man too!"

"I know it. I will tell him I am sorry."

"And you will not start and tremble if cousin Allan asks you to sing this evening? Dr. Hamilton, and his daughter, and my fellow-student, Lincoln, are coming here to tea. I believe there is some other company invited."

"Let me stay in my room, Gerald—in the garden—any where. I shall be happy any where," said Lila, hurriedly.

"Trembling again! You will get over this nervous timidity in the society you will meet here. You will like those who are coming to-night. Dr. Hamilton you know already. There will be none here who can sing half as

well as yourself; and they may not have music; so you may as well not think of it."

"How old is Miss Hamilton?"

"About your age."

"Handsome?"

"Yes, I think she is."

"And agreeable?"

"When she chooses to be."

"And that is always, is it not?"

"Sometimes she is too mischievous and childish to be very agreeable. She is an only daughter, which often means a spoiled one."

"Then she has no sister. She is like me—alone. Perhaps she has dear friends," said Lila, thoughtfully.

"Very likely—five hundred of them. I think you will be pleased with her."

"You do not seem like yourself this noon, Gerald."

"Do n't I? Well, the reason is," he returned, "I had depended on having you all to myself this evening, which this expected company will prevent. I have so much to tell you. You see I am still selfish."

"Do you have any leisure in the morning?"

"Yes; I do n't go to the office till nine o'clock."

"We might have a long walk before breakfast—a long walk before any one is awake, and we should not be interrupted."

"Can you wake early enough? I walk here every morning. The sunrise reminds me of Rosedale and of Lila."

"No more flattery, if you please."

"Can you wake as early as five?"

"Yes."

"There is Captain Rose and cousin Allan coming this way. I must go back to the office. Come, sister, let us meet them."

She trembled a little as the captain approached, but addressed him without hesitation:

"I am sorry, Captain Rose, that I behaved so foolishly."

"All right, all right, my dear!" he returned, drawing her arm through his. "You are not used to the rude bluntness of a sailor. Come and walk with us. We must try and be better acquainted. Do you know, my dear, that when I look at that fine-looking, manly lad"—he pointed to Gerald, now walking rapidly toward the house—"I find it somewhat difficult to discover a likeness to the ragged little urchin of other days?"

"I was reading last week a little Sabbath school volume, and I found a sentiment like this: 'It is easier to detect merit in superfine broadcloth than when it is clothed in rags.'"

"Good! Did you hear that, Lewis?" said the captain, laughing. "Your little, sensitive plant has a spice of sarcasm in its composition."

"Her playful hits are harmless," returned Allan; "there is no bitterness about them. Provoke them as often as you please, uncle; we can not have too many of them."

"I did n't mean, cousin Allan—excuse me, sir, I meant to say Mr. Lewis;" and Lila stopped short, stammering and blushing.

"Cousin Allan sounds quite as well," he replied, kindly; "I think I like it better. But now tell me what did you not mean?"

"I did not mean to allude to any one in particular when I repeated what I had read. I was thinking how impossible it would have been to have discovered in Gerald at that time those noble and manly traits of character that we now observe so easily."

"It is a lesson that we are very slow to learn," observed the captain, "not to judge of persons by their external appearance. We often find that a polished exterior hides only the accomplished villain, and yet our judgment is none the less favorably biased by a prepossessing appearance; and more than half of the time the outside polish, if it do not conceal desperate wickedness, is a heartless sham—mere superficial tinsel and glitter."

"I want you both to observe the real loveliness of the scene around you," said Allan. "Suppose you delay your moralizing till we return to the house, and give your attention to the object of our walk. There are many choice varieties among all these shrubs, Lila, and I have promised myself a rare treat in showing them to you. Captain Rose, of course, will be blind to any beauty unconnected with the sea. Let me go first along these narrow walks to guide you."

As much as Captain Rose was in love with a sailor's life, he found a great deal to admire during his walk. The simplest flowers were his favorites. He vehemently disclaimed the idea that nature could be improved by art; yet he was not a little pleased with an artificial pond among the shrubbery, which gleamed and sparkled as the emigrant fish leaped about in its limpid waters. Edith soon joined them, and they remained out of doors till it was time for the expected company to arrive.

In one of the turnings they came suddenly upon a group of children, among whom were Harry, and Ada, and Ally Cory. They were playing at visiting under the trees. The little girls were each nursing a big doll, and several of them were regarding with looks of mingled sadness and severity the little images who, in consequence of indecorous behavior, were standing in corners by themselves, with their glass eyes beseechingly raised to heaven. Two of these staid little mammas were busy preparing supper for the company, and a low table was half covered with Liliputian crockery-ware, under the careful supervision of Ada, who was bustling about and giving directions with matronly dignity. The little boys sat with their heels up, after the American fashion, very composedly smoking pieces of grape-vine in lieu of cigars. Harry had donned a pair of old spectacles, which made his eyes water continually, and by the aid of which he was steadfastly gazing at a bit of newspaper.

"Wife," said he, just as the older party came up—"wife, how long before tea will be ready?"

"In a minute," replied little Ally. "Just take the baby while I go and see to it."

She placed a tiny doll upon his knee, and he, throwing away his grape-vine, began to tend it as tenderly as if it had been alive. The older party walked on, apparently unobservant, and none of them laughed, although the temptation to do so was almost irresistible.

"I can remember," said Captain Rose, "when I used to join in just such plays, and when my childish mimicry of mature life was as real and earnest as my experience of it has been."

"I should like to see the nymph who played wife to your personation of a husband, uncle," said Edith, playfully.

There was a short silence, during which Mrs. Lewis felt that she had unconsciously recalled some painful idea, and then he answered in a low tone:

"She died at nineteen, Edith."

"Forgive me, uncle; I did not mean to remind you of any thing sorrowful."

"I know it, my dear. You have often wondered that I never married. Had she lived my course in life would have been far different. We were both very young, she not older than your young friend here, when we were betrothed to each other. She was very fair, and gentle as an angel; I, not so rough and bearish as my solitary battle with the world has since made me." His voice softened as he spoke. "Her death has made my old age solitary. Every year, as the number of familiar faces lessens around me, and new customs and manners render my old, cherished whims and fancies more obsolete, I miss more and more the gentle voice and smile that, if she had lived, would have lighted up the old man's way."

"Dear captain," said Lila, coming up to him and putting her hand on his arm, "you must not feel lonely. You must not feel that you have outlived all your friends, or that you are alone because those that remain are younger than yourself. There must be many who prize your soci-

ety—who love you dearly. It can not be otherwise with those who know you.”

“Hush, little flatterer!” he returned in his old, cheerful voice. “I am not going to be a sour, grumbling old bachelor. I can think of the lost one, of her pleasant looks and winning ways, and of the time, not far distant now, when I shall see her again, without finding fault because the world does not halt in its progress to keep pace with the old man’s slackened step. Some of the dashing reforms of the age make me a little giddy at first sight; but I am not one of the sort who weep because such slender fingers as yours, little one, touch the piano keys instead of the spindle and shuttle. So do n’t carry about on your little shoulders a burden of care on the old bachelor’s account. Ah! I see,” he added, as he looked down into the pale but earnest face before him, “I see that you require a bit of advice. I am not going to scold, so that blush, brilliant as it is, goes for nothing. Get a little more courage and confidence in yourself, and throw away half of your consideration for others. Lewis, is not the counsel good?”

“I greatly approve of it. Not, Fairy, that it would make you any prettier, but much happier.”

A very pleasant company filled the drawing-room in the evening. Most of them were invited to meet Captain Rose, and were sea-faring men like himself. There were very few ladies present, and the conversation ran principally upon nautical subjects.

Grace Hamilton came with her father and a rather awkward but intelligent-looking young man, who was introduced to Lila by Gerald as his fellow-student. There were no other young people in the company, and these, after a while, withdrew by themselves into a window-recess.

If Lila was too diffident, Grace Hamilton was the reverse. She laughed and talked incessantly, hardly allowing any one else to speak. Yet she was seldom tiresome. Her wit, though not always delicate, had the ring of the genuine metal, and her good-nature tempered the sarcasm

that would otherwise have offended. She strongly resembled her father in looks and manner. But in vain did Lila try to feel interested in her animated conversation. The lively repartee and sparkling gossip fell unheeded upon her ear. Merry and careless as she was naturally, her late experience of sorrow had given her a disrelish for such empty, brilliant nothings as formed the staple of Miss Hamilton's conversation. The subjects discussed by the older part of the company had vividly recalled the memory of her dear, long-absent, sailor-father. She listened with absorbing interest to their anecdotes of the perils of a sea-faring life, to their animated portrayal of storm and shipwreck, and to their more affecting delineations of the brave exposure of life and generous self-sacrifice of the noble-hearted tar in seasons of peril.

Then they spoke of the sailor's pleasures, and her eye kindled and her cheek glowed with an enthusiasm akin to theirs as her buoyant imagination followed the steps of the absent parent from one to another of the rich, beautiful countries that she heard described. The whole company at last, with the exception of the four young people, collected around the center-table to examine some maps and charts which Mr. Lewis brought from the library.

"Edith," said Captain Rose, turning suddenly to his niece, "let me tell you a little incident connected with my last voyage."

They all sat down, silently attentive; and the busy babler in the window hushed her prattle to listen.

"My ship had just completed her lading at Canton, and we were only waiting for a favorable wind to drop down the river, when an American came on board to secure a passage home. He was a tall, pleasant-looking man, a little pale and sallow-looking, but we did n't think much of that, for we had been for a month looking at those yellow Chinese. He had been abroad a long time; had spent five years in India and China, toiling to accumulate wealth for a darling child, and in all that time he had only once heard from

home. Poor fellow! he must have been homesick many a time; and I shall never forget his rapture when we were fairly at sea. I soon ascertained that he was seriously ill, and rapidly declining; but he would not hear a word about it.

“‘Captain,’ he would say, as I met him in the morning, ‘I am getting stronger every day. Every mile that we gain homeward gives me fresh life.’

“I never saw a man so impatient of delay. At times he even held me responsible for contrary winds. We encountered a tremendous gale when we were twelve days out, but the wind was fair, and his pale face beamed with exultation as the brave ship was swept furiously across the face of the boiling waters. When the hurricane was over, and it was found necessary to repair the ship, the necessary delay occasioned him a fever of excitement. Poor fellow! he would pace the deck by the hour, as if his rapid walking could shorten the distance home. At last he became too weak to walk, and the sailors brought him on deck in the morning and carried him below at night. How wistfully would he gaze into the blue distance! The crew built an awning over his mattress to screen him from the sun’s rays and from the wind. They all pitied him, and, in their rough way, were attentive to him. He seldom spoke now, except to answer our inquiries about his health.

“‘I am better, thank you,’ he would always say; ‘I shall soon be quite well.’

“All day long he held in his hand a small pocket-Bible, from which he often read. It was much worn, and had three names written on the fly-leaf in a delicate female hand—his own name and that of his deceased wife, and underneath the name of their only child.

“When he grew too weak to be taken on deck, he sent for me. I was shocked by the rapid change in his looks since the previous morning. His cheeks were much more hollow and sunken, and his unnaturally-large eyes were already dull and glazed by death. He knew it now.

“‘Captain,’ said he, ‘I can delude myself no longer. I did hope to see my darling child once more. I have prayed that I might die with my arms around her, and with my weary head upon her bosom. I have so longed that my last words should breathe a blessing on her young head. My child! my child! I am dying!’

“He was slightly delirious for a moment, then he turned to me again.

“‘My poor fellow,’ said I, ‘is there any thing I can do for you? Have you any message to leave, or any business that should be arranged?’

“‘Yes; I sent for you to say that I wish my chest to be forwarded unopened to my child. You will find her name and place of residence in my pocket-book. You will also find there a draft on a bank in New York by a mercantile company in Canton for fifteen thousand dollars. It is my child’s fortune, and will place her above the reach of want. If you will act as her guardian, captain, or see that some responsible person is appointed’—

“He had spoken with great difficulty, and now stopped, gasping painfully. His face expressed the greatest anxiety that I should clearly comprehend his wishes.

“‘I understand perfectly. I will faithfully perform what you have intrusted to my care.’

“My assurance seemed to satisfy him, and his thin features assumed a tranquil, happy expression as he turned to me again.

“‘That curiously-ornamented telescope that you have so often admired, captain, must serve you as a trifling remembrance of the poor sailor whom your kindness has befriended.’

“Again he stopped to get breath, and to rally his fast-failing faculties.

“‘This Bible, captain,’ he whispered hoarsely. I bent over him to catch his words—

“‘Will you take it to her as the last gift of her father? Tell her that he died in humble reliance upon that Savior

whose history it contains. Tell her he died happy, with only the wish ungratified to embrace his darling child once more.'

"His voice faltered and his eyes closed, but he opened them again presently, and smilingly said, 'God bless you all!'

"Then he turned his face away, and died.

"We buried him in the sea, for we were many leagues from shore. Our surgeon read the burial service, and the hardy mariners wept as for a dear friend. Tough old sailor as I am, I must confess that it was several days before I recovered my usual cheerfulness. I can hardly say that I have yet done so; for the sad message that I am to bear to his daughter haunts me night and day. I have pictured my embarrassment and her distress till I would give a round sum to any one capable of doing the job with delicacy."

Lila had drawn near during the recital of this narrative, and now stood by the sofa where Mr. Lewis and his wife were sitting. Allan watched her anxiously as her color came and went. He knew her early history, and was not surprised at her interest in the story, or at the dread that took possession of her as it proceeded.

"Lila!"

She did not reply to him; but, clasping her hands tightly together, gazed intently into the captain's face.

"Sit down here, Lila," whispered Mr. Lewis, tapping her shoulder lightly to arrest her attention; "sit down, my dear child. You are too nervous to hear such dismal stories. We must start something cheerful. We'll have some music presently."

She put aside his hand and steadied herself by the table, becoming white as a snow-wreath while she spoke:

"Will you tell me, Captain Rose, the name of the poor orphan child?"

Every one noticed now her imploring look and manner, and Gerald hastily approached.

"I can't, my dear—I've forgotten it. I left the pocket-

book in my trunk at the hotel. You can fancy a name if it will make the story more complete."

"But, dear captain," said the child, earnestly, and with difficulty keeping from falling, "can you remember nothing more?"

The old man trembled with a strange sympathy as he saw her emotion.

"Nothing at all. Pray forget it, my dear, or remember, if you can, the good advice I gave you this afternoon."

Lila was wholly unmindful of the visitors present, who were curiously regarding her.

"Where does she live, captain? Where will you go to find her?"

"I have forgotten the name of the town. You must have a little mercy upon an old man's failing memory. Stay! I do now recollect that the name of the family where she is staying is Clare, and that they call the place Rosedale. Where it is I haven't an idea. Perhaps, Lewis, you could enlighten me."

He stopped short, for Lila fell heavily back into Allan's arms. The company crowded round, and all was confusion.

"Stand back! all of you!" cried the loud voice of Dr. Hamilton, as he elbowed his way to her side. "It won't help the matter to stifle her to death. Lay her on the sofa, Lewis. Open the blind, Gerald, and give her some fresh air. I would n't turn that hartshorn into her eyes, Mrs. Lewis; it won't improve them. Poor thing! poor thing!" said the doctor, pityingly, as a slight shiver crept over her frame, "you are entirely overset now, and that's the fact!"

"I did n't think of her being so easily excited. It was a plain, simple narration of facts, such as she might hear any day, I should suppose," said the captain, in a deprecating tone, as if it were necessary for him to apologize for what had occurred.

"The poor sailor was her father. Do n't you under-

stand? You do n't suppose she'd go off like this for any body that happens along? There, Mrs. Lewis, that will do; she is better now."

Lila sat up, but her face was still as white as marble, and she did not raise her eyes or speak.

"I do n't like this," said Dr. Hamilton aside to Gerald; "she'd better cry as Mrs. Lewis and my hare-brained Grace are doing. Try and rouse her, my boy."

But the captain had sat down by her side already, and, lifting her light form, drew her close to his broad bosom.

"I was your father's friend," said the old man, gently. "I closed his eyes in death. He gave me his last message of love to his darling daughter. Let me supply his place to you."

She looked up gratefully; the stony apathy of her sorrow melted before his genial sympathy, and the welcome tears gushed forth in torrents as she hid her face upon his shoulder.

Dr. Hamilton, with his usual bluntness, now insisted that no one should speak to her, but that she should go immediately to bed. With the tears all over his rough face, he expressed his indignation at the general weakness of the company, none of whom had refused to weep with the orphan child. He went up stairs with her himself, and with a voice that shook rather suspiciously, scolded Edith all the way, because she had so little self-control. When he reappeared in the drawing-room he was greeted with so many inquiries respecting his young patient that he good-humoredly stopped his ears with his fingers.

"All right, Lewis; she'll get over it. Gerald, my lad, suppose you stop fidgeting about it. She has hardly seen her father since she can remember, and it is n't reasonable that she should die of grief. Why, my Grace here would have forgotten that she ever had a father in half of the time!"

"Do n't talk so, papa."

"But you were a right down good girl, Gracey, to cry so

hard without being asked to do so. It's the best thing I ever saw in you. Captain Rose, why do you look so lugubrious? You must have told her some time, and now it's fairly out; you haven't got to dread it any longer. It's a weight off your mind, you see; you are light and easy now, you know, and why in the world don't you look so?"

It was impossible to avoid laughing at his odd, curt manner.

"I've got half a dozen patients to visit yet before I sleep. Grace, don your hat and shawl directly or I'll leave you to walk home with Lincoln."

"I should like that, papa, of all things."

Lincoln's eyes sparkled as if he would like it too.

When they were all gone Gerald went softly to the door of Lila's room. Edith was there reading by a night-lamp.

"May I come in, cousin?"

"Yes, if you will be quiet."

"Let me just speak to her."

"No, no!"

"Only a word, cousin."

"Not a syllable."

"Why, is she so very ill?" whispered Gerald, in alarm.

"No; but Dr. Hamilton has ordered perfect quiet. I am going to sit up all night with her."

"Let me watch instead of you. I will not disturb her. I can bring my books in here and study. I can speak to you if it is necessary. Shall I, cousin Edith?"

"No, indeed! What a tease you are! You may take my place a few minutes while I run down and speak to Allan. But if you talk and she is worse, you will be responsible."

Lila opened her eyes and put out her hand as he approached on tiptoe to look at her.

"I am now indeed an orphan, Gerald."

"But dearer to us all—more precious than ever, my dear sister."

"I had so steadily believed in his safe return, Gerald; and I should have been so happy always if I had been beside him in his illness, and—and when he died. I can't bear to think of his dying among strangers, and of his grave beneath the sea," said Lila, shuddering.

"If I were bearing this grief instead of yourself, dear Lila, you would say to me, 'Take comfort; our Heavenly Father has ordered even this.' And what a comfort it is that he died trusting in the Savior—the Savior that we have learned to love, and who sympathizes as none else can in the griefs of our early orphanhood! Ah, what countless blessings are yet ours! Let us not murmur while he spares us to each other."

"No!" said Lila, firmly. "We will be happy and cheerful. I shall overcome my faults some time, Gerald; and, when I am stronger and have more self-control, I shall become myself a blessing to the dear friends who remain."

"Yes; and to me more than to all. But cousin Edith said you must be quiet. You will not be able to walk in the morning, but perhaps we can ride together in the afternoon."

He bent down and kissed her forehead.

"Good-night, little sister. God bless you!"

"Good-night!" she replied, almost cheerfully.

When Edith returned she was sleeping sweetly. It was evident that she needed no watching; so, leaving the door open that she might hear her if she was restless, Edith went into her own room on the opposite side of the corridor, and was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"But there was one in folly further gone;
With eye awry, incurable, and wild,
The laughing-stock of devils and of men,
And by his guardian angel quite given up—
The miser, who with dust inanimate
Held wedded intercourse."

It was a week before Lila could overcome her sorrow and languor so as to be able to join the pleasant evening parties in the drawing-room. Gerald was very attentive to her, and rode or walked with her every day, and quite neglected his studies in his endeavors to divert her thoughts from the mournful themes that were ever uppermost in her mind.

Dr. Hamilton came to see her every day, and it was with a good deal of surprise that Lila heard from him one morning that she had been sent to Elm Hill by aunt Ruth to be under his treatment for spine complaint.

"I am not going to prescribe hot water or hot iron; so you need not look so horrified. There are several other remedies to be tried first."

"Indeed, doctor," urged Lila, "I am quite well. I don't need any medicine. I don't see what aunt Ruth was thinking about."

"Nor I. Such a brilliant, healthy complexion!" said the doctor, drawing her before a mirror and pointing to her pale cheek. "Such a straight, robust figure! So free from nervous sensibility! Really, aunt Ruth, what on earth *were* you thinking of?"

He made such odd grimaces at her in the glass that she laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Hysteria!—a new symptom. Well, my dear, I have brought you a strait-jacket, which you are to wear every day of your life. How do you like it?" he asked, holding up a pair of elastic shoulder-braces.

"I can not tell, sir."

"You won't like it at first—no poor maniac does; but habit will make it easy."

Edith put her head into the door, and seeing the doctor took it out again. He called after her: "I want to leave a prescription with you for this warbling magpie—this bird of paradise."

"I will attend with much pleasure to any orders that you will leave," she replied.

"In the first place, then, you will fit these braces to her, and see that she wears them constantly, only leaving them off when they become positively unendurable. In the second place, she is to exercise in the open air two or three hours in each day. Her diet—let me think how we shall regulate her diet. It must be good, and plenty of it. Her bath must be in salt water—a regular ducking night and morning. Talking, singing, and laughing will answer for recreation. Before retiring at night, take in equal parts a clear conscience and cold water. There! I've ransacked the whole pharmacopœia with special reference to your case, little mocking-bird, and this is the result."

"How shall we remember it, doctor?" inquired Mrs. Lewis. "It seems very profound."

"Have n't I told you that I am coming every day to repeat it? I am going to take my pay in music; I shall take it up as fast as it becomes due. Will you ride with me, Skylark?"

"Not to-day, if you please. I promised to ride with Gerald this afternoon."

"What of that? I want you this morning. Mrs. Lewis, where is Miss Oriole's plumage? Thick shawls, if you please; for the morning is damp."

Lila was soon ready to accompany him.

"Will you ride long, doctor?" asked Mrs. Lewis, following them to the door.

"Can't tell. It will depend on *la belle* canary. If she gets fatigued I shall hasten back. Come, bower-bird, we'll take wing."

He drove directly into the city. He knew his little charge well enough to be sure that the different phases of human life that she would observe there would effectually while her thoughts from herself. He was not disappointed. She looked out with much interest as they drove through the busy streets. The number of half-clad, starved-looking people shocked her. A number of ragged children clung to a haggard-looking woman, who was sitting on the sidewalk nursing a squalid-looking infant. Richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen passed by so near that their rustling silks touched them, but no one spoke to them or seemed at all interested in them. Splendid coaches drove rapidly by, and if the eyes of the fashionable occupants chanced to fall for a moment upon them, it was with the same unobservant carelessness with which they regarded the stone paving of the street. Every eye was steadfastly intent upon its own pursuit of business or pleasure, and took no thought of the separate interests, the different fortunes, the thousand shades of thought and feeling alive in the vast crowd.

What troubled Lila most of all was the apparent heartlessness of their own conduct in passing so many destitute persons without inquiry.

"Did you see those poor people, doctor?"

"Where? No, I did not. Here are others of the same sort, I suppose."

He pointed with his whip to several women who were begging of the indifferent passers-by. Dark masses of tangled, uncombed hair fell around their pale, cadaverous faces, and gave a wild, gipsy look to their features.

"Poor creatures!" said Lila pityingly. "Shall we not stop and speak to them?"

"I've seen them there every day for a week. I sent

Lincoln down here yesterday to give them a trifle and to watch them. It was n't five minutes before they spent the money for liquor, and returned to their post here to beg."

"What can be done for them?"

"Nothing."

"A little way back, doctor, I noticed some who were different from these. They were children, and so sad-looking and miserable!"

"No doubt, no doubt. They are as plenty as musketoes in a swamp in the Summer-time—about as annoying too; and dirty enough to breed a pestilence!"

"They looked very poor, sir," urged Lila gravely, for she was wondering that one so kind and thoughtful as Doctor Hamilton should manifest so little interest.

"Poor! Well, I suppose they are," he replied, yawning as he spoke. He had been up nearly all night visiting his patients, and being accustomed to the sight of such unhappy objects was not likely to exhibit any particular commiseration now.

"Do you not think, doctor," asked the child, looking up anxiously and half-reprovingly into his face—"do you not think that we should stop and inquire about them? They may have met with great misfortunes."

"Well, blue-bird, I should n't wonder if they had."

He roused himself to reply as he observed her perplexity and distress.

"Look here, my child, this won't do at all. I can't let you vex your mite of a heart about these street vagabonds. It will counteract all the good influences of the open air and the ride. Besides, there is actually no use in fretting. When sympathy and tears give Trinity Church there a hoist into the sea, the same agencies may be relied on to clear our streets of beggary. You see the thing is impossible. This misery, in a majority of cases, springs from vagrant habits; and if all the wealth that thrift and economy have accumulated, or that fortunate men have inherited, were distributed among these degraded people they

would not be permanently benefited. It would soon be squandered, and they left in the old bog of want and misery. It is a hopeless state of things."

"Can nothing be done for them?"

"Well, if means could be devised to send them all to till the uncultivated soil of our great Western wilds, the nuisance might be abated, especially if some ingenious Yankee would contrive an apparatus for whisking into those far regions every emigrant from Europe as soon as his foot touches our shores. By Jove! I'd like to tend that machine myself. I would n't stand about wages."

"But surely, doctor," said Lila, "there must be many honest and good people among them. They ought not to suffer for the sins of the rest."

"Very true, little preacher. They are not wholly neglected. There are societies for their relief, and many families have regular pensioners upon their bounty. There are city missionaries and committees appointed to search them out, and to relieve them. These foreign paupers are adepts at shamming. They will resort to any expedient that will enable them to live without work. They are as averse to labor as the titled aristocracy in their own countries, whose extravagance takes the bread from their mouths, and then charitably turns them over to be supported by honest American labor. Is it not very provoking, little moralizer?"

"The poor people are not to blame, sir. Perhaps—perhaps," said Lila, hesitating a little, "God sends them here that we may help and teach them. If he sends the heathen to our doors, many of us can be missionaries who could never go to foreign lands. And those who give so much money that teachers may be sent to instruct those distant, perishing heathen, will surely praise God now for bringing just such opportunities of usefulness home to them."

The doctor burst into a loud laugh.

"What an idea! There is a little quiet satire hidden under all that, or I am mistaken. But I was going to tell

you about a patient of mine. Will you dismiss your care of the city a short time, and give me your attention?"

She left off watching the crowd, and turned round so as to face him.

"Well, my dear, my patient is a rich, old woman, odd and miserly. She grudges every cent of the necessary expenses of life, and would die of want were it not for a charitable widow who lives in the same building. How the widow can afford to do any thing for her is a mystery, for she is dependent on her own labor, and is bringing up three orphan nieces, two cats, three rabbits, and a parrot. The last—a present from her dead brother—swears like a trooper, and so mimics her voice in the family devotions, that she is often obliged to put him—cage and all—into a dark closet. You would like the widow. She is a large woman, with erysipelas pimples all over her face, and is blind of one eye. But the eye that remains is so radiant with benevolence and with transient gleams of humor that it wholly excuses the absence of the other. Her voice reminds me of a grist-mill when the gate is quite raised—there is such a delicious, growling, good-natured rumble in it."

"Is the widow your patient?"

"No, no; I am only giving you an idea of my patient's only friend. My patient—the old lady—is dying of stinginess. Twenty years ago her husband, poor fellow! fell desperately ill, and for the first time in his life was obliged to call a physician. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and a variety of powerful drugs were prescribed for him, to be taken one after another till he obtained relief. Well, either the drugs or the disease proved fatal, for the poor man died. You are attending to what I am saying, Miss Linnet?" said Dr. Hamilton, suddenly remarking Lila's interest in some beautiful children at play on the marble steps of a house.

"The old man died, sir."

"Yes. Well, now, what do you suppose the old woman did next?"

"Buried him!"

"Why, yes; buried him, of course. But I did n't mean that. She went and laid up all the medicines he left in a safe corner, so that she could have them to take if she were ever sick herself."

"How did she know the nature of the drugs, or that her complaint would be like his?"

"Why, that's the beauty of it; she did n't know. Last Saturday she was taken slightly ill—nothing serious—would have been well by this time if she had let herself alone. It was just a pleasant indigestion, caused by bolting whole the crust and gristle that her tough old gums at last refused to masticate.

"'Send for a doctor,' suggested the kind widow.

"'A doctor! Not I! Have n't I a plenty of doctors' stuff laid up for old age? A doctor's visit costs money, my girl!"

"So she takes down her precious box of medicines, and commences operations with No. 1. It was of no use; the gristle was obstinate; and so, without any ado, down goes No. 2. Of course, my dear, she grew rapidly worse, and by the time she had exhausted her medicine-chest was past recovery. Even then the kind widow was obliged to promise to pay the doctor's fee before she would permit her to send for me. I believe I understood her character at a glance. I recognized her as one whom I had often seen begging alms in distant parts of the city. I knew that I had several times seen her making deposits of some value in one of the city banks. I am ashamed to own it, my dear, but I really did not feel at all pitiful as I gazed upon the avaricious old hag stretched on her death-bed before me.

"'I am a physician, madam,' I said, approaching her.

"'Yes, yes, I know it. But she'—pointing to the widow—'is to pay your bill. I have no money, sir; not a cent to bless my soul with.'"

"'Well, ma'am, it will make small difference to you who pays it. If you have n't got your will made I

advise you to be about it. You have n't a moment to lose.'

"She fairly screamed—it sounded like the howl of a dog—'My will! Why, you do n't suppose'— She stopped, gasping.

"'I suppose that you are about to die. The drugs that you have swallowed are dangerous medicines; they are prescribed sparingly and with great care by physicians. I for one never meddle with them at all, for I believe they are certain to kill if they do n't cure. They'll kill *you*. So if you care where your money goes you must hurry up.'

"'O, do n't say that! Dear, good doctor, save my life! Do n't let me die yet! Save me! You shall not lose by it. See here!' She spread aloft her ten scraggy fingers. 'So many you shall have, doctor, besides what she will pay.'

"'Ten dollars!' exclaimed the friendly widow.

"'Cents! cents! Who said dollars?' cried the old woman, turning her fierce eyes upon her companion.

"'Dollars or cents,' said I, 'it does n't matter; I shall not be able to earn them. Your time is about up. If you do n't care what becomes of your riches, I'm sure I do n't. Fetch a tea-cup,' said I to her attendant, as I began to parcel out some quieting powders.

"'I pitied her when I saw the look of despair that settled upon her face; I could not help it, as much as I detested the close-fisted avarice that had brought her to this condition. I had not supposed her features capable of any expression but greed and cunning.

"'Have you no relations?' I asked, more gently.

"'I hope not. I must see a lawyer. Stay, sir; let her go for one. You have sentenced me to death; you shall stay and witness my will.'

"Well, in half an hour, Miss Whippowil, that will was drawn, bequeathing quite a pretty fortune to the worthy widow, who had never dreamed that the parsimonious old creature was worth a penny. She had been the old beggar-woman's sole friend with no expectation of a reward.

When the will was properly witnessed and deposited in the lawyer's hands, the old woman laid down and composed herself into a stolid, stern silence, which has remained unbroken ever since."

"How long will she live?" asked Lila, trembling all over; for his story had recalled to her mind the fearful death of Nannie Lee.

"When I called this morning she was dying. She had not altered perceptibly, but had been gradually getting weaker. If she had n't been made of iron she would have died three days ago. Are we riding too far, my dear?"

She crept shudderingly nearer to him and clasped his arm.

"O, sir, it is dreadful to die so!"

"Why, you little sensitive plant!" exclaimed Dr. Hamilton; "if I had told my Grace this story she would have giggled an hour; not that there is any thing laughable about dying. I didn't mean to tell you of that part. I told the widow on my first visit that the old woman was too confounded stingy to live; and what do you think she said, bonnie Thrush?"

"I do n't know, indeed," she replied, beginning to wonder at the variety of names bestowed upon her.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the doctor. "She said that if the old woman found a hair in her broth she licked it to save the gravy. Ha! ha!"

His laughter was contagious.

"Very queer things we doctors see, my dear. All sorts of people make up *our* world. I visited an old man yesterday, sick with fever. He was suffering greatly from acute headache. I prescribed the necessary medicines, and directed his good wife to apply a strong mustard paste to his feet, and to bathe his head in cold water. This morning I found him with his feet hanging over the side of the bed into a tub of cold water, and all the medicines, mustard paste included, applied to his head, and a stout pair of flannel drawers wrapped around the outside to 'keep the

strength in !' The old man's face, in its unobscured beauty, is about the size of a tea-cup ; muffled in its huge head-dress it was nearly as large as a dollar. Well, my dear, I stood by the bed, and laughed and shook, laughed and shook, half smothering myself in my efforts to be decent, when the man's wife came up to me, sobbing audibly, and touched me lightly on the elbow. 'Do n't cry so, Mr. Doctor,' said she. 'Do you think the sanctification is taking place in Mr. Brown?' You may be sure, Miss Chickadee, that I bolted in a hurry. The good old lady seized a camphor bottle and made after me, but I was in my carriage and half-way to Elm Hill before she could have got ready to administer her restoratives. Hush, my dear ; it will make you ill to laugh so. Ha ! ha ! ha !'

The child could not readily repress her merriment. His manner of relating it had been as ludicrous as the story itself.

"Shall I tell you another story, little Miss Nightingale?"

"O, no, if you please ! It makes my side ache to laugh so. Where do you get so many names for me?"

The doctor smiled, and began to whistle "Old Hundred" very slowly. As they turned into the avenue at Elm Hill they saw Mrs. Lewis and Ada coming down the walk to meet them. Edith held up a letter, which Lila guessed directly was from Rosedale. The doctor walked his horse till they were near enough to speak, and then pretending not to see them, he drove gayly past, turning a deaf ear to Lila's request to be permitted to walk back with them.

"I'll pay you for this, Doctor Hamilton," said Edith, coming into the dining-room quite out of breath with her hurried walk—"see if I do n't."

"No hurry about it, Mrs. Lewis ; I can charge it in the bill. Pray, suit your own convenience."

"What does he mean, Edith?" asked her husband, as they all took their places at the table. He had come in while the doctor was speaking, and was deceived by the

perfect gravity of his face and manner. "Are you indebted to him, my dear?—if so, let me pay him at once."

"I wish you would, I am sure. I don't know the exact amount; it is a considerable sum, though."

"I will attend to it directly after dinner. What is Lila laughing at?—and the rest of you? Are you all bewitched?" asked Mr. Lewis, laying down the carving-knife, and glancing from one laughing face to another with a puzzled look.

"The truth is, Lewis," said Captain Rose, "that Edith and Ada have been all the morning out in the piazza, watching for Miss Lila's return. From the library window I heard them planning to meet her at the end of the walk, and so ride back in the doctor's carriage. They had a letter, or something of the sort for her. Well, it seems the doctor was out without his spectacles, and unfortunately overlooking them, they had the pleasure of returning in the same order in which they went out. This is the debt that Edith wishes you to pay."

"Indeed! I shall leave her to settle it as she can."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Dream on, when brighter years have come,
O'ershading with their wings
Each idol of the heart's deep home
To which the memory clings—
Dream on."

AFTER dinner they all assembled in the library, and Mr. Lewis played, while Lila sang for an hour. Although she was fatigued with her long ride, and her fingers were continually straying into her pocket in search of aunt Ruth's precious letter, still unread, she readily sung whatever they desired, till Dr. Hamilton, noticing her pale looks, in his rough way declared that they all seemed determined to overwork his little patient, and to hinder her recovery.

"Why, doctor," said Captain Rose, "it is you who have been calling for song after song, scarcely allowing her to take breath."

"Ah, well; I forgot that she was mortal. Lewis, let us have a walk over your grounds. Gerald, I wish you would take one of these books—no matter which, any of them are dull enough—and read your sister to sleep."

"I had much rather talk to you," said Gerald, when they were alone; "but you are tired. What shall I read?"

She held up the letter.

"What! the seal is unbroken. You have n't read it yet!"

"I have had no opportunity."

"That is true. But what if there should be secrets in it, meant especially for you?"

"What folly! I never had any secrets."

"Ah, Lila!"

"From you, I mean—only one, at any rate."

"I do n't believe in secrets. Let us never have any from each other. Will you promise it, sister?"

Lila's color heightened as she thought how closely, in the coming years, she must hide the secret of her love.

"It is n't right to make such promises. Who knows how many circumstances may occur to prevent our keeping them? Let me hear the letter, please, and let the future take care of itself."

He broke the seal, and cast his eye rapidly over the contents.

"That is not fair, Gerald," said Lila. "Read it aloud."

"I only wanted to make sure that there were no bad tidings for you. The pages look bright and cheery."

"By this time," wrote aunt Ruth, "our absent pet and Gerald, too, must be anxiously looking for news from Rosedale. And in the first place I must tell you, in the language of all modern letters, that 'we are all well, and hope that you are enjoying the same blessing.' Every thing about the place is in clock-work order. Mat says 'the sperrit of the place be gone with Miss Lila;' but we get along admirably notwithstanding. He comes to me with his reading lesson just as he did to you; but I have nothing to say of the progress he makes. How you ever got him safely through the alphabet into words with syllables is a perpetual wonder to us all. He has kept his promise to you, and has read a few verses in the Bible that you gave him every evening, although doing so is evidently a heinous thing in his eyes. He does it 'sacretly, because of the praste.'

"'You'll have to confess this to him, Mat,' I said to him when he had finished his lesson last evening. The cunning of his look was indescribable. 'O, thin, an' he'll niver let me, shure!'

"'How is that? I thought he was very strict about such things.'

"'There for ye! You see, misthress, I kape confissing

and confissing till he's clane bate out intirely, and bids me hould me tongue. Sorry would I be to disobey. An' this hape of a sin I lave till the last, and niver get to it at all, at all. An' who's to be blamed for that, shure?"

"I think that Mat is really desirous to learn, apart from his wish to please you. Bridget told him that it was 'larn-ing' that made the difference between herself and him—that were it not for her 'nate readin' and writin'' she should be as awkward and inferior as he was. A day or two ago he came to me with a curious question:

"'Misthress,' said he, 'an ye plaze, an' what may be the longer-wather?"

"'Indeed, Mat, I do n't know; I never heard of it before.'

"'It's in the Bible, shure!"

"'In the Bible! I think you are mistaken, Mat.'

"'An' I will show ye it directly. I turned down the leaf to that same; an' I showed it to Bridget, the place an' the words, but divil a bit did she do but laugh—the mane hiritic! Here it is, misthress.'

"I took the Bible, and read from Paul's letter to Timothy, 'Drink no *longer* water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake,' etc. I tried hard to keep a grave countenance, but I am afraid I was as bad as poor Bridget. It was some time before I could make him understand the meaning of the apostle, and then he was so ashamed of his ludicrous blunder that I forbade Bridget to mention it to him.

"The day after you left home, my dear, I got a letter from cousin Charles. He has not yet returned to Ohio, but is at my cousin Annie's, in Massachusetts, assisting her to settle her affairs. He writes that he had purposed to visit us again, but has changed his mind, not feeling sure that he could bear it. Poor Charles! Cousin Annie is going West with him. She has wisely concluded that if Frederick's reform is to be permanent, it is best to keep his old associates at a distance. So she has sold her place, furni-

ture and all. Now get ready, as my Bridget says, for a surprise. Marian is coming to live at Rosedale. She was willing, and even desirous that the homestead should be sold, but she is not willing to go to Ohio. The idea of occupying a log-house, as Frederick intends to do for a time, does not seem to suit her. 'Let me stay with cousin Ruth in Boston, or go to your friends in New York State,' she said to her mother, 'at least till you get established in the wilderness.' So Annie wrote to me for advice. We held a family council, and considered the subject in all its bearings, not forgetting how greatly the absent one will need a companion after her return, and the result is that she will be here when you come.

"Dear me! how impatiently we all count the days of your visit—Mat especially! He procured at first a long string and tied as many knots in it as there were days in the allotted time of your absence, and every night he cuts off a knot with his jackknife. He jerks it off as if it were a heretic's head. Grandma says that Bridget has no knack at crimping her cap-frills, and no one here can tie grandpa's Sunday cravat either easily or becomingly. Nero spends two-thirds of his time in running up and down the lane to meet you. And old aunt Ruth's spectacles often get a little dim as she sits in the evening twilight and listens to grandpa's loving praises of his missing darling.

"Ah, I almost forgot to tell you about Mr. Locke. You knew before you went away that the Church were dissatisfied with him, and that some of them had begun whisperingly to undermine his character and his religious influence. The concealed opposition has been growing more and more violent, and a committee was appointed to wait on him this week and request him to resign his pastoral charge. It was supposed that he had no suspicion of what was intended, and you may judge how startled the good people appeared when, last Sabbath, he asked for a dismission.

"What!" said Deacon Knapp, "dismiss him, and let

the rumor go abroad that Gothard parish is not a desirable one! No, indeed!

"They began in haste to discover their pastor's merits. 'What a good, sound preacher!' cried young Cooke Swellum, who had just graduated at the University, you will remember. Of course his opinion, considering the advantages he has had, was allowed to be weighty.

" 'No heresies from Mr. Locke, I can tell you,' says old William Conant, rubbing his long, little fingers together briskly, 'nothing but the very marrer of the Gospel!'

" 'Then what an exemplary Christian!' chimed in Deacon Peters, who, with his wife Jerusha, had mournfully deprecated the minister's inconsistencies for a long season. 'I should like to see the person who would dare to breathe an imputation upon a character so spotless. He's just the man for Gothard! Exactly!'

"The deacons waited on Mr. Locke, and remonstrated. How could he think of leaving his own dear flock? Did he want more salary? Was the parsonage inconvenient? Did he need a resting spell or a journey? His pleasure should be their pleasure, but he must give up his intention of leaving them.

"Notwithstanding all this, Mr. Locke is going. He has somehow discovered their plans, and won't stay on any consideration. Mrs. Bradford has been active in the opposition against him, and, unlike the rest, has unflinchingly maintained her ill-will. She has never liked him since that memorable picnic. She persists in attributing the mortifying disclosures of that day to his hesitancy in pronouncing you worthy of the prize. You will think aunt Ruth is beginning to retail gossip in her old age, but I have only repeated what farmer Bradford said here this morning. I thought you would be interested in the news, although I am sure that you will be the last to rejoice over this miserable state of things. Write to us often, my dear, for the 'old folks three' never tire of your letters, but read them over and over."

"Well, sister, what are you thinking of?" asked Gerald, as he laid down the letter. "Have n't you a word to say to all this news? Aunt Ruth writes an easy hand for an old lady, as plain as printing. You are in a brown study, little sister."

"I was thinking of Marian. I am afraid we shall not love each other. She is so beautiful and so used to society that she will find Rosedale tiresome. She will not know how to bear with my commonplace ways and"—

"Hush!" he put his hand playfully on his lips. "I am not going to hear a word against the 'sperrit' of Rosedale. I am afraid that her tastes and habits are too unlike yours to promise you much enjoyment, but she must be strange indeed if she can help loving you dearly."

"O, Gerald!" exclaimed Lila, rising hurriedly, "every one is out for a walk. Come with me to my room, and we will open poor papa's chest."

He hesitated. "Come, Gerald. You need not be anxious for me," she understood his look, "I am learning self-control. Come and help me."

"Certainly, if you wish it, Lila."

The young girl had less self-control than she had imagined. She found it very difficult to go through with the necessary examination. Large, glittering tears fell frequently upon Gerald's hands as he assisted her, and his own eyes were dim with sympathy. Very little was said by either for a time.

"If I had had all this money that Captain Rose says papa has left for me six years ago, what an education, Gerald, you should have received!"

"I should have been scarcely worth educating, Lila, if I had been mean enough to rob you."

"Look here! Such shawls and— Come in here, Mrs. Lewis," exclaimed Lila, as Edith passed the half-open door; "please come and tell me what to call all these things."

Edith came in accordingly, and, kneeling by Lila's side as she sat on the carpet, began to assist in unpacking.

"This, my dear, is an India shawl, rare and costly, and never out of fashion any where. These are Canton crape. Ah, what rich embroidery! You will look like a princess, my dear. And this—let me see—O, this is embroidered mull! What a delicate pattern! There are two dresses of this. Look here, Lila! You must keep this exquisite satin and lace for a bridal dress. It is too pretty for any thing else. I suppose your father procured these for a trifling sum in those distant heathen countries; but they would cost a fortune here."

"What shall I do with them, Mrs. Lewis?"

"Why, wear them, to be sure!" returned Edith, laughing.

Lila glanced at the mourning that she was wearing for Nellie. She thought, too, of Isabel and of her father, and the idea of ever putting on such elegant and costly dresses seemed almost sacrilegious; and to her mind they seemed to be hardly in keeping with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

"They will keep, my dear," said Edith, noticing her looks. "Of course they are unsuited to you now, but they'll be just the thing in the years to come. What have you in that little box?"

"Something that I want Gerald to keep and wear for my sake. Will you, Gerry?"

"How animated you look all of a sudden! I can tell better when I have seen it."

She held up a large gold chronometer. Mrs. Lewis eagerly examined it.

"It is larger than Allan's, and much prettier. His cost two hundred dollars."

"I will make a watch-case for you to-morrow, Gerald," said Lila.

"No, no; I can not think of taking it. It is too valuable to give away."

"Then I'll go home to Rosedale to-morrow. I won't ride with you or walk with you, and I sha' n't write to you again, or remember you at all. You need a watch, and I

heard you say so long ago," said Lila, pouting and then smiling as she looked up coaxingly into his face.

Mrs. Lewis laughed. "Cousin Gerald, you will have to submit. If I were you," she added, still admiring the watch, "I should be glad to."

"I will wear it and keep it in order for you, Lila, as long as you please. There is something else in the box."

"I know it. I have seen it often and often when I was a little child." She held up an old-fashioned locket. "It has both of their portraits—papa and mamma."

She put it into her bosom unopened, and again, in spite of her efforts, the tears gushed forth.

Poor Gerald felt as if Lila's little fortune had interposed a slight barrier between them; and, well as he knew her noble nature, he felt uneasy now that she was comparatively rich. How many an air-castle had he reared to the skies, filled from basement to attic with vague ideas of sheltering her, of providing for all her wants, and, even when carrying too slender a purse for his own comfort, anticipating and gratifying her most trivial wishes! Well, it could n't be helped. And Lila—did she dream that her wealth raised her in any degree nearer the lofty position where her heart had placed the beloved playmate of her youth? She never thought of riches as adding to her consequence in any way, and she still looked forward to the time when the first place in the heart she so prized should be occupied by another. Her last letter to Rosedale must close the history of her visit to Elm Hill:

"Six weeks since I left Rosedale!—six happy weeks, although spent so far from the home I so dearly love. I am so much stronger, so much better every way for my visit, that I think my health may now cease to be a source of anxiety to my friends. Will you believe that a morsel of a pink—a rose, Gerald says—has taken up its abode on my cheek, and that the bent, awkward figure is getting every day straighter? I am getting very bold and forward

too. I practice music every morning with Mr. Lewis—first on the piano in the drawing-room, and then on the organ. I am learning thorough-bass, or rather trying to learn it; for I mix all the positions together till they are tangled like a kitten's knitting-work. I have a teacher, too, in vocal music. He takes great pains with me, but I don't like it. When the spirit of song is awake and seeking a fitting expression, it does seem too bad to be eternally pulled down to set rules. If I were to be the prima donna of an opera there might be some sense in it; but to warble to grandma and grandpa at Rosedale, I am sure they would like best the old, untrained numbers.

"We had a fine concert here, all by select vocalists, on Tuesday evening. The listeners pronounced it exquisite; yet it all seemed so precise and artificial, so coldly correct in its sweet utterance, that I was not half pleased. I do so long to hear again the bold, clear notes of the free forest birds, and to sing by myself once more all alone by the shadowy streams.

"The cupola has become my favorite resort; it commands a charming prospect, taking in the blue ocean line and its white shipping. It is as extensive if not as dear to me as the view from Chestnut Mountain. The room is fitted up in beautiful style; but, being in cousin Allan's house, you must of course know that already. It is paneled with plate-glass mirrors, and the walls are covered with delicate French paper, white and gold. The stairs leading to it are covered with velvet carpeting, and on each side of the door is a wax figure, colored and modeled from life. There are large windows on either side, draperied only with lace, although there are green blinds which can be drawn down at pleasure. The dome is of colored glass. Captain Rose says that Mr. Lewis has succeeded admirably in combining the ornate with the practical. He praises all of cousin Allan's arrangements to me, and when I am riding with him, as I often do, he is forever repeating some new story of his goodness and benevolence, or admiring some new

plan that he is carrying out; but when Mrs. Lewis calls him to observe any alterations or improvements, he will descant by the hour upon what he calls cousin Allan's wild and *bizarre* notions.

"The upper piazzas of the house are charming promenades, and there Gerald and I meet to watch the sunset, and to chat of the old, precious times. He takes the luxurious elegance of every thing here quite naturally, and laughs when I speak of being embarrassed by it. To me it seems wrong to ruffle the deep French embroidery of the pillow-cases, or to sleep in the folds of such fine blankets. The nights have been cold enough so far to require them. Do you not believe that, in spite of the kindness of every one here, I shall be glad to return to the less artificial life at home? I have been several times with Gerald to see his friends, the Corys. I was acquainted with them immediately. It is pleasant to see their interest in Gerald, and his almost filial affection for them. Little Ally always manages to fall asleep in his arms. Tell Mat to give up counting the knots of his string, and to meet me with the wagon at the village Saturday evening. And please say to my new cousin Marian that I hope she will be happy with us, and that we shall love each other. Adieu till Saturday."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Her braided locks were coiled the neatest,
Her carol song was thrilled the sweetest;
And round the fire, in Winter cold,
No archer tale than hers was told."

LILA had no sooner returned to Rosedale than she began to carry out some long-cherished plans in behalf of the indigent and the unfortunate. They had seemed too wild and visionary to speak of while she was poor, but with the means now at her command the wildest of them assumed a sane and feasible aspect. She found, on calculation, that only the income of her money would afford almost unnumbered opportunities of doing good.

"The poor ye have always with you," were the words of the gracious Redeemer. Lila was not one of those who gladly ignore the presence of suffering when it is in their power to relieve it. Her heart was warm with sympathy for the poor and the unfortunate. Even the erring she could not bear to send empty away. Her benevolence did not confine itself to the distribution of gratuitous advice among the needy. On communicating the state of her affairs to grandfather Clare, she was greatly astonished to learn that the bequest of old Nannie Lee, which had been invested for her benefit, amounted now to five thousand dollars. She began to be afraid of the curse of riches, and with the approbation of farmer Clare and of her guardian, Mr. Lewis, commenced at once a systematic course of benevolence that nearly covered her income.

She found, even in Gothard, and within a stone's-throw of the residences of wealthy Church members, families destitute of the commonest necessities of life—without furniture,

almost without clothing, and with hardly a shelter over their miserable heads. She rented comfortable houses and plainly furnished them for such, and exerted herself to procure work for them, according to them—what is to the honest and industrious poor a privilege—liberty to repay her whenever their circumstances permitted. This was generally accomplished in a short period, for gratitude is a wonderful incentive to labor. With the surplus of her first year's income she built a neat cottage for a poor widow, whose labor was the sole support of five little children. This was the first of the white cottages that now line either side of the lane leading from Gothard to Rosedale.

To get time to feed the poor and to clothe the naked, and also to pursue her favorite employments and studies, she prevailed on aunt Ruth to leave with them Bridget, who had become domesticated in the family, and who had a strong dislike to life in the city. She was a stout, resolute creature, and spared both Lila and Marian the performance of heavy labor. They divided the cares of the housekeeping between them, and were soon like sisters in their affection for each other. It required no little tact on the part of both so to conduct the affairs of the household as to leave to grandma Clare the idea so pleasant to her—and to all old ladies—that the order and comfort that appeared in every part of the house was the result of her own methodical arrangements.

The years rolled by and Lila was twenty years old. Rosedale had changed very little, except where the growing shrubbery had wrought silent and unnoticed alterations. The same old clock ticked in the kitchen, and every chair and table occupied its long-accustomed nook. The old wagon which, years ago, had excited the ridicule of bland Mrs. Higgins, still served for a family carriage, but the old mare was dead and her place supplied by the beautiful horse that Isabel had used, and which had been a present from Squire Thorpe to Lila. Nero looked older, and he was

certainly lazier. He had at last rewarded Mat's long cessation of hostilities by agreeing to reasonable terms of peace.

Marian, not yet willing to go West, has been for the space of three years receiving the choicest attentions of Zeno Bradford, Esq., now a popular lawyer in the adjoining town, and a probable aspirant to a seat in the State Senate chamber. True, no one out of the family suspected his love for the repentant little Shakeress, but it was no secret at Rosedale. Every-where else—even in his father's house—it was supposed that Lila was the object of his attentions.

"It's a rigelar romance now!" said old Goody Green. "There she's been and reskied him from obliviousness, and made him anew, as it were, and now that he's vullible and crank, and looked up to, who else should he choose to be his bride?"

Irish Mat—even earnest, blundering Mat—was engaged to be married to "jist the swatest darlint foriver and iver, Bridget Cahoon," who had long ago persuaded him to "confiss to her instead of the praste."

Farmer Clare and his wife, recovered from their deep sorrow, had settled down into hale, hearty, comfortable old people. The farmer cracked his stereotyped jokes with the neighbors who came in to sit an hour in the evening, or with Lila, who still bore her old designation, Fairy. To her great annoyance, the clergyman of the parish, a young man, had, in spite of the report of her engagement to another, embraced every opportunity, for a year past, to pay particular attention to her. As a pastor he visited at Rosedale as often as he pleased, and Lila's consideration for his sacred office, and her warm interest in the welfare of his parishioners, had led him to suppose that she might easily be induced to assume the onerous responsibility and dubious position of a minister's wife.

She had altered very little. She was taller, and the contour of her face and figure was rounder, but still sylph-like and delicate. Her complexion was now transparently pure,

with only the slightest tint of color, except when the excitement of earnest thought or conversation sent quick flashes of beautiful crimson to tingle for a moment on her cheek. Heavy bands of rich, brown hair had succeeded the light, flaxen locks of her childhood, and these were always arranged with exquisite taste about the finely-shaped head. Her form was not perfectly erect, but the slight, habitual stoop was rather graceful than awkward. To all out of the home circle, there was a gentle dignity in her words and manner that secured respect as well as admiration; but to the old farmer and his wife she was the unaltered, merry child, seemingly incapable of the thoughtful care which made their old age so tranquil and easy.

But Lila was not happy. Deep in her heart was hidden a fount of incurable sorrow. The trial that she had feared so long ago she was now bearing. She had learned from Mrs. Lewis, two years ago, that Gerald loved another. Unconscious of the wound she was inflicting, Edith had filled a sheet with her own approbation, and with the happiness of Dr. Hamilton in the prospect of seeing his daughter united to his favorite pupil. Miss Hamilton was beautiful and accomplished—had grown quiet and lady-like as she grew older.

“Ah, Lila *amie*,” wrote Edith, in the fullness of her content, “you ought to be here to see them. I shall quarrel with you if you come no oftener to Elm Hill. Leave your town paupers, and give us a long visit, and help me to tease the lovers. They will make a charming couple. He goes with her every-where.”

Poor Lila! Beneath all her strong resolutions to think of him as a brother only, there was a different feeling—a fountain of love welling up that would not brook a rival. How hard she struggled with herself! How bitter and protracted was the discipline by which she acquired such perfect self-control! She would be satisfied with his brotherly love. That, at least, must remain undiminished. He would not easily forget how she had been loved by his

dead sister—he could not wholly overlook her unselfish devotion to his grandparents. In her next letter she resumed the style of earlier days, and addressed him as a dear brother. He came the next week on a brief visit to Rosedale, and, to remove the embarrassment under which he was evidently laboring, she tried, in her cheerful, sisterly way, to lead him to converse freely about his prospects for the future.

“Tell me all your plans, Gerald; I have a sister’s right, you know.”

He went out hurriedly without answering her, leaving her puzzled and perplexed by his reserve and silence. When he returned he had heard the rumor of her engagement to Zeno. His eyes sparkled and his cheek burned with anger when he came into the little parlor where she was still sitting alone. He was more violent than she had ever seen him, and reproached her in no chosen terms for what he called her coquetry. He would not listen to a word of explanation, but, placing on the table before her the gold chronometer—the gift of other days—abruptly departed for the city. And so the last, sweet dream—the dream of his continued brotherly affection was over. But she rose up strong and composed from that stormy interview—strong in her sense of right, composed in her trust in God. They had held no correspondence since, beyond the interchange of short notes relative to her grandparents. He had made but one long visit to Rosedale since their estrangement, and that was while Lila and Marian were spending a month with aunt Ruth in Boston.

He was coming home now to live at Rosedale. The village doctor had retired from practice, and Gerald was to take his place.

“I should, of course, have preferred city practice,” he wrote in his last note to Lila; “but I can no longer throw upon you the care of my dear grandparents in their old age. I trust I shall never forget their claims upon me, or cease to *be grateful* for your long devotion to them. I thank God

for the opportunity—which seems to be providential—of practicing my profession near to them. I hope, Miss Wood, that my coming may release you from your present cares, and that nothing may now prevent you from following out your intentions in regard to the future.”

“What does he mean, Marian?” asked Lila, when they were in their room together at night. “If he wrote to me in Hebrew I should understand him as well. ‘Intentions for the future!’ What can he mean?”

“I should say,” returned Marian, with a wise look—“I should say that he is either love-sick or jealous.”

“Jealous! What right has he to be jealous of me, I should like to know?”

“That frown is n’t pretty, dear. Men are often jealous without any right or reason.”

“Well, you are mistaken for once. He is to be married soon. Mrs. Lewis writes that now that he has finished his studies the happy day may be looked for directly. She says that he would not own his engagement to Mr. Lewis, and when she scolded him, he replied, ‘Wait a while, coz, and see.’”

“It is fashionable to tell lies about such things,” said Marian. “So Mrs. Lewis is not in his confidence?”

“No; she sees them in society together, and judges from that, I suppose. I think she forgets that I am not really his sister, or she would not write so freely to me.”

Marian raised a sudden, keen glance of scrutiny to her companion’s face, and her own features lengthened perceptibly.

“What can his note mean, Marian?” continued Lila—“you see that it do n’t mean jealousy.”

“What then, sister?”

“I think,” she replied, blushing deeply as she felt rather than saw Marian’s eyes searching her face—“I think that for some reason he dislikes me, and that the sight of me makes him uneasy.”

“I do n’t see that that explains the note.”

"Yes it does—partly, at least; he is trying to open the door for my departure from Rosedale."

"Lila!" exclaimed Marian suddenly; "you do not mean to leave us!"

"Not while the dear old people live, unless I am turned from the door, which is not likely to happen."

"Why could n't he stay away? If he prefers the city, let him remain there. I'm sure no one would mourn."

"Do not say so, Marian. Grandma cried for joy when he proposed returning. He is very affectionate and—and noble, and will dislike no one but—but me. And I have a plan, sister mine," said Lila, turning her eyes from Marian's study of them; "and I know you love me too well to object."

"What is it?"

"The division of the housekeeping must be re-arranged. My share in it must come when he is absent, so that he may be annoyed by seeing me as seldom as possible."

She sat down before the toilet-glass, and began to take down her hair.

"For his sake, Lila?"

"Yes, for his sake and—and mine."

She turned deadly pale, but was instantly relieved by a burst of crying. Marian wept with her.

"I see it all now. You are a great deal too good for him, Lila dear. If he do n't know it," said Marian, shaking her head indignantly, "he has n't the wit of a weasel. I have no patience with him."

"Hush, Marian; you hardly know him yet."

"I do n't want to know him. Come here, my love; you tremble all over. Let me undress you, darling." Marian's love and sympathy made her very beautiful. "I shall stay with you always, dear sister. I won't leave you—not even for Zeno—while you are so unhappy."

"Ah, yes you will," returned Lila, looking up and smiling cheerfully. "It is only a momentary weakness, dear Marian. You will see to-morrow that I am myself

again. I shall hear of no sacrifices on my account, and the preparations for the bridal will go on, my dear. You shall see how stoical I can be. Only at present let me see as little of him as possible."

"Grandma," said Lila the next morning, "will you care very much if I spend the evenings in my own room?"

"Why, my child, we should miss you, of course."

"But Gerald is to be here now, and you will not miss me so much. I can study a great deal if I can have only the evenings."

"Well, you can try it. We can call you down if John insists. He will be here to-day, Lila. How handsome and noble he has grown! Do n't you think so?"

"He was always handsome, grandma."

"Yes; he is stouter than his father was. I think, Lila, we may be proud of him."

"You will speak to grandpa about the evenings?"

"Yes; I think he is stouter than his father was," said the old lady, absently. "We shall soon forget his long absence in the joy of having him here again. You look pale, my love."

"It is nothing; my head aches slightly, that is all. I am going to my cave in the mountains for a cure."

"You must get back before he comes. How pleasant it will seem to have him at home again! In two hours, Lila, remember."

"Marian will attend to all that is necessary to be done this morning. I have filled the vases in his room. I suppose he still likes flowers. Do n't get uneasy about me if I do not return till afternoon. I want a long ramble in the woods."

"But what will Gerald say if you are gone? You know that for two years, poor boy, he has hardly had time to look at us."

"He is going to live here now, grandma. He will have all the opportunity to look at me that he desires. Do not tire yourself, dear grandma."

The old lady's eyes had a puzzled look as they followed the young girl.

"Ah, well," she sighed, "they have seen so little of each other for years! When he comes to live here, and they are together once more, it will all come right. Only two hours now! How soon he will be here!"

But it so happened that after Gerald's return he scarcely ever met Lila at home except at the table. He became popular as a physician, and was absent a great deal. She was never in the sitting-room with the rest when he was at home. Marian rode with him, walked with him, and was always ready with needle and thread to fasten stray buttons or tape for him, but she never mentioned Lila.

He met her oftenest in society, where she was deservedly a favorite. There was a charm in her manners and conversation, aside from her unrivaled gift of song, that attracted every one. Her intercourse with him differed in no respect from her polite manner toward all. If he attempted to address her with the familiarity that their long acquaintance justified, the unvarying dignity and composure of her manner repelled him instantly. In his professional calls he often heard of her—respectful inquiries in regard to her welfare from the proud and wealthy, and prayers for blessings on her young head from the destitute poor whose wants she relieved.

"Ah, Lila," he often thought, when listening to some new revelation of her active goodness, "radiant with spiritual beauty; still, as of old, winning all hearts, and casting off as worthless only me."

Farmer Clare could not understand how the cheerful, sunny aspect of Rosedale had been so suddenly changed. He had anticipated a long succession of pleasant evenings when Gerald should be once more established among them, and had imagined that his gay Fairy would be gayer than ever in the society of her old brotherly companion. What else he had fondly imagined, or whether he had planned at all in regard to the future of the orphans, it would be use-

less to inquire; for all his anticipations seemed likely to be disappointed.

"Where is Fairy?" he would ask when he sat down in his accustomed chair of an evening, half vexed at Marian's officious kindness in bringing his slippers.

"She is studying in her room," was the invariable reply.

"Humph! I believe the studying demon must have passed out of your head, Gerald, into hers, for she is wonderfully taken with her books since your return."

One stormy night, when Gerald, having no pressing calls to make, was at home, they were all together except Lila in the sitting-room. Occasional attempts had been made to sustain a lively conversation, but there had been ominous periods of silence interspersed.

"I can't stand this!" exclaimed the old man. "The pattering of the rain is dull music. Gerald, my boy, did you leave all your good spirits in the city? You look as dismal as the weather."

"I'm sorry. I look pretty much as I feel, I suppose. Shall I read to you?"

"No; deliver us from books, I say. I'd give more to hear one good, hearty laugh from you young folks than to hear all the books that ever were written. There, I believe Marian has contrived to smile."

"I think," said Marian, "that Lila must keep all the smiles and happy looks stowed away somewhere; for we have very few when she is not here."

"That is true. How happened she to get this sudden freak of studying evenings into her head? She never did so till your return, Gerald."

Marian glanced at Gerald, who got up hurriedly and stood in the window recess, gazing out into the darkness.

"You know, John," said grandma, "that she will leave studying and come down whenever you wish it. She thought we should n't miss her after your return, my dear Gerald; and it does seem strange that we are so lonesome. Had n't you better call her, Marian? Tell her

to come just for this evening because the weather is so gloomy."

Gerald remained by the window, so that Lila did not observe him when she entered; but he turned round and watched her attentively. There were traces of recent tears on her cheek, and she was very pale.

"And so, grandpa," she said, tripping lightly to the old man's side, and playfully sitting down on his knee, "you have got the blues, and want your teasing fairy to charm them away. What a strange old man!"

"What a queer little witch! Sing, Fairy; fill the old house with music, and drown the noise of the rain."

"The beautiful rain! It is creeping along the garden-beds, and soaking the thirsty fields, and silently helping to secure a noble harvest for you. I will tell you something which will delight you. You remember that poor little French woman whose broad, frilled cap made you laugh so when she came here to beg?"

"Yes, Fairy."

"She had two little boys. One was six years old, the other eight."

"Yes; I remember. How long ago was it?"

"Two years, grandpa. She was in great distress and very poor, and the money that we gave her lasted but a little time, and then she went to New York and did washing. It was too hard for her, and she became ill. She had no one to care for her, and her little Jacques and Victor were without food two whole days. But when she was almost in despair a gentleman found her out, and brought medicines and a nurse for her, and nicely clothed the little boys, and placed them at school; and, when she was strong enough to work, procured for her such work as she had been used to do in her native France. And now, grandpa, guess the name of the kind gentleman. It is some one that you know."

"I can't tell. O, I think it must be Allan Lewis."

"No; it is Gerald Cameron. Aren't you pleased? Of

course you are not surprised. It is like him to do what is good and noble. He would not resemble his grandfather otherwise; and besides"—

A warning little cough from Marian arrested her attention, and turning suddenly she met the earnest gaze of Gerald. Her playful manner changed instantly.

"I did not know that you were here, Gerald."

"I am sure of that," he returned; "we should not else have had the pleasure of seeing you. I hope that my presence will not drive you back to your solitude again."

There was something in her quick, appealing look that strangely moved him; it seemed so earnestly to entreat a kinder feeling on his part. He softened toward her immediately.

"If you have finished your story," said farmer Clare, laughing, "let us have all the old songs, one after another. Let us cheat the dull night of its gloom. What shall she sing first, Gerald?"

"I shall be charmed with any piece she chooses."

"Have you no preference?" asked Lila, again turning toward him.

"If I might be allowed to choose, I would ask for some of the songs that you sung when we were children—in those early, happy days before my sister died."

They all drew silently nearer as she sung; for sometimes, as the memories of the past came thronging back, her voice was scarcely audible in its low cadence. The late, unhappy years were blotted out from Gerald's memory as he listened. He only remembered the cloudless days when they went hand in hand together, with no barrier of thought or feeling between them. Marian watched him closely, and read with ease the eloquent language of his unguarded and animated looks. Still she did not understand him. Loving, as she was now sure that he did, her gifted adopted sister, how had he so far forgotten himself and her as to engage himself irrevocably to another? She began to doubt whether the rumor of his attachment to Miss Hamilton were true.

He had denied it to Mr. Lewis, and it seemed unlike his noble nature to equivocate. Still the undisputed fact of his attendance on that young lady puzzled her.

"I suppose it must be true," she said to herself at last. "But his unhappy looks are now accounted for. Well, it is good enough for him ; he don't deserve to be happy if a pert city miss can make him forget one like Lila."

Wisely considering that such matters are never helped by the officious meddling of friends, she resolved to keep her suspicions to herself, and let the future take care of itself.

"Let us go to L. to-morrow, Lila," said Marian, as Lila arose from her seat ; "that is, if it should stop raining."

"No, not to-morrow," said farmer Clare. "I must use the horse to-morrow. Can you not wait till the next day?"

"I suppose we shall be obliged to do so," she returned, laughing, "for there is no other horse that you will trust us to drive."

"I shall be at leisure in the afternoon," said Gerald. "Let me have the pleasure of taking you to L. in my carriage."

"We are engaged for the evening, you know, Dr. Cameron," replied Marian, looking doubtfully at Lila.

"Yes ; but we shall return in time for the party."

"Well, then, I shall be delighted to go with you."

"And Lila?" he asked, turning toward her

"It is only Marian who has business at L. I accompany her merely to drive the horse, because she is too timid to manage him properly. Now that she has secured a better escort, I am sure she will excuse me."

Gerald bit his lips in silence, for Lila's indifferent and almost haughty manner of declining his invitation had instantly recalled his coldness and reserve.

She was too unwell the next morning to appear at the breakfast-table, and he did not meet her again till she came

down stairs with Marian in the evening to accompany him to the party.

It was very seldom indeed that Lila attended a large party, for the gay company and frivolous conversation did not accord with her taste, and she found that the dissipation of mind that resulted was any thing but promotive of the Christian graces that she earnestly desired to possess; but this was a wedding-party, given by Mrs. Thorpe on the occasion of her nephew's marriage to a young lady of Lila's acquaintance, and she, therefore, did not feel at liberty to decline.

She scarcely replied to Gerald's inquiries about her health, and he noticed a nervous tremble in her whole frame as he lifted her into the carriage. But in the large drawing-room where the company were assembled she was more attractive than he had ever seen her. All the *élite* of the surrounding country were present, and there were many handsome faces and graceful forms among the company; but the chief charm of the evening was in Lila's brilliant and intellectual conversation, and in her rare musical powers. A hush, like the silence of night, crept over the gay assembly when it was whispered that she was to sing. Not a tone of that rich, soul-filling voice was to be lost. As the exquisite melody floated among the listening crowd—at first low and soft, then in its purity and sweetness swelling high and filling the great rooms—all hearts melted before its strange thrilling power, and many wept tears of painful delight as they gazed reverently upon the rapt countenance of the almost inspired songstress. It was a peculiarity of Lila's singing that those who listened to its utterance of deep feeling could not forbear to rank as they deserved the idle, puerile ditties, and still more puerile accompaniments, which made up the popular music of the day. It was a heart-touching lay that she now sung; it told of the unutterable longing of the orphan's heart for the lost sympathy of parental love; but when the clear, fresh tones rose fullest, it told of the deeper, purer love of the Heavenly Father,

which can never be taken from us. No one stirred when she ceased till she herself broke the spell by turning to converse with Zeno Bradford, who stood by her side. Then the low hum of groups in conversation went on as before.

"Tell me who she is, Cameron," said a fine, noble-looking young man, touching Gerald lightly on the shoulder. "I suppose you must know her, for you have been staring at her this half hour as if entranced."

"It is my sister—Miss Wood; not my own sister, but we were brought up together."

"Well, if I were you I would seek a nearer relationship. There, don't put on your dignified airs; I meant no harm—only a jest."

"Miss Wood is not exactly a subject to jest about. Do you wish to know her? Shall I introduce you?"

"No; I am going away directly. Who is that very plain young man who is so uncommonly attentive to her?"

"It is Zeno Bradford, Esq., of W."

"I have heard of him. He is spoken of as a young lawyer of unusual ability. I was going to say that his looks display very little, but now that he is speaking and his countenance is animated, I must change my opinion. Is he a connection of Miss Wood's?"

"Not yet."

"But expects to be. I understand. Well, I wish them much joy. I think I have seen her before, though I've puzzled myself in vain to tell where."

"You saw her at Elm Hill long ago. Don't you remember Captain Rose's account of her father's death at sea?"

"Is it possible? I don't believe Grace would recognize her. She is much changed, is she not?"

"I can not tell, Lincoln. Sometimes I think she is unaltered, and then in a few hours I can detect no trace of the child that she was."

"Will you wish me joy, or shall I congratulate yo

Cameron, that you are no longer obliged to attend Grace in my stead?"

"Neither. I only hope that you may not find the attendance so tedious and tiresome as I did," replied Gerald, laughing.

"What a provoking speech! At least congratulate me on having secured a chance to practice at L. You will be less dull and benighted here."

"I am very glad, dear Lincoln, that we are to be neighbors. When you commence housekeeping I am afraid my calls on you will be so frequent as to be troublesome. I wish you would go with me to-night, Lincoln, and visit one of my patients. I think it a hopeless case; but I should like your opinion of it."

Lincoln consenting, and Mr. Bradford, at Gerald's request, agreeing to escort the young ladies home, the two friends went out together.

"Do you know who Gerald's companion is?" asked Marian, coming to Lila's side.

"No; I do not recollect that I have ever seen him before."

"It is Dr. Lincoln, of L., the young physician that Mr. Lewis has just introduced there."

"He studied medicine with Dr. Hamilton at the same time with Dr. Cameron," said Zeno.

"Yes; and we met him at L. this afternoon, at the druggist's shop, and Dr. Cameron introduced him to me. He told us that Frank Thorpe had invited him here to-night."

"Are you not tired, Marian?—had we not better return home?" asked Lila, for whom all interest in the party had departed with Gerald.

But she found it difficult to leave—so many had become interested in her.

"You surely will not go yet," said kind Mrs. Thorpe; "you are the life of the company, and I have promised to introduce you to so many. Stay an hour longer, my dear;

it is only eleven now, and you will get home in good season."

"But my head aches violently, Mrs. Thorpe. I should have ventured no where else with such pain and dizziness; but I can never refuse you. I shall have to suffer the penalty, and keep my bed to-morrow."

"I thought you were looking uncommonly well, my dear. Why, your cheeks are like roses!"

"And burning like fire; and my hands are like ice. I must really go. You surely do not doubt that I am ill?"

"No; but I am disappointed. Well, well, my dear, hurry home, and get better as soon as you can."

In the morning Lila was too unwell to rise, and grandma Clare insisted that Gerald should see her, and prescribe for her. To this Lila objected positively.

"I only need rest, grandma; I shall be quite well to-morrow. You will make me really ill if you insist upon my seeing him. He would know at a glance that I am only tired and nervous."

So the old lady, much against her will, consented to leave her to the care of Marian, and went down stairs to Gerald with such an alarming report of Lila's looks and exhaustion that he was miserable with vague apprehensions all day, and was, therefore, much surprised to meet her at the breakfast-table the next morning, looking very little paler than usual.

He had been at Rosedale about three months when, returning home one evening at a late hour from the bedside of a sick patient, he saw a light in the little parlor. He guessed readily enough who was there. But if he had had any doubts on the subject they would have been speedily dispersed, for the front door almost immediately opened, and two persons came out and stood under the trees. He drew back noiselessly among the shrubbery. He saw the affectionate caress, heard the low-spoken "adieu for a week, love," and then Zeno Bradford came rapidly down the walk, and mounting his horse rode away. The door softly

closed, and the light disappeared from the parlor and presently gleamed brightly in the chamber where the young ladies slept.

Why did Gerald—tired as he was—hurry back to his office in the village, and spend the night without sleep among the odoriferous drugs?

The time fixed for Marian's bridal was now near at hand. The bridal dress was Lila's gift, and was fitted and made up in faultless style by her own fair hands. It was of white silk, covered with lace.

"Ah, how proud will Zeno be!" said Lila, admiringly, when, just a week before the day appointed for the marriage, Marian tried on the whole bridal array. "Was there ever a lovelier bride!"

"Dear, Lila! how shall I ever repay you?"

"See here! these beautiful shawls are mine—the gift of my father who is dead. I have kept one of them for you a long time. There! please do not thank me; it makes me feel awkward; and besides, it really gives me a great deal of pleasure to present it to you."

"Dear Lila! I am so grateful, and these are so beautiful, how can I help?"—

"You are determined not to obey, at any rate," interrupted Lila. "How Zeno expects to manage such a willful child is more than I can tell."

Marian laughed, but her eyes were full of tears.

"Will your brother be here?"

"No. Here is his letter. He says business of a private nature will take him to Massachusetts next Spring, when he hopes to have the pleasure of visiting me, and of presenting to me a sister. It's Olive Humphreys, I know. She never went into society at all after he went away, and they have corresponded for years; so he might as well have told me her name. And my mother, dear Lila, has accepted Zeno's offer, and in the Spring her home will be with us. Fred won't really need her when he has a wife to keep his house."

"You will be very happy, dear Marian."

"But I shall think always of your being so sad and lonely here."

"You will be very foolish if you do. Come, Marian, it is almost dinner-time, and I am going to have a ramble by myself in the woods this afternoon. No, no," she continued, replying to Marian's look; "I do n't want even your company. Come near my forest domain at your peril! Let us put these things away."

The dresses were put away, and great piles of ready-made table and bed linen were brought out to be inspected and closely packed for removal. Thick blankets and counterpanes were made to pinch and crowd each other in huge boxes. These were nailed together and corded by Mat, who, being summoned for that purpose, did not cease to whistle and significantly wink during the whole performance.

CHAPTER XXX.

"O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odor which doth in it live."

It was a warm afternoon in September, but the heat of the sun was tempered gratefully by the delicious, cool atmosphere of the season.

Gerald sat at his table in his room at Rosedale, writing busily. The door was partly open into the hall to admit the air, and presently he heard Lila leave her room, and go down the stairs. Farmer Clare sat in his arm-chair by the open front door, half asleep; but he roused himself when he heard her step.

"Is it you, Fairy? I was just thinking of you. I hardly see you at all lately."

"I have been so busy with all these preparations. They are completed now, and I am at your service."

"I am glad of that. Grandma and I are both moped to death. As for Gerald, he is sober enough for a funeral always, and is no company for any one."

"He is naturally anxious about his patients."

"Ah, well; it's like enough. Is aunt Ruth coming to the wedding?"

"No, I think not; but she invites the bridal party to make their tour in her direction, and to make their home at her house as long as they please."

"Are you going with them?"

"No indeed! Do you suppose I don't know that you can not spare me?" returned Lila, playfully kissing his cheek.

"You will miss Marian very much. Where shall we find a companion for you?"

"No where. I shall be lonely a little at first; but they are to live so near that we shall be often together. Do you know I am to direct all the purchases for their house-keeping? Zeno has rented *such* a pretty cottage, only there are no flowers or trees about it."

"What a fairy for trees and flowers!" said the old man, looking out with a pleased air upon the rich variety of shrubs still in blossom.

"Am I? Well, a house looks so naked without them; they give it a sweet, homelike aspect. Don't you think so? Now, Zeno's pretty cottage looks as if it had got up fresh and bright in the morning, but had forgotten to put its clothes on."

He laughed heartily.

"And Mat and Bridget are to get married too, it seems."

"Yes; but they will remain here just the same."

"I hope, Fairy, there will be no more marrying at present; it gets every thing out of joint. Such things were managed more easily when I was young. All these fine furbelows that you have worked up for Marian were not invented then."

"You had something else in place of them though; and when the young girls had to spin and weave all the linen instead of buying it cheaply, getting married must have been a serious business."

"Well, well, I dare say it was. But tell me, Fairy, do you think our Gerald will be married soon?"

"Mrs. Lewis wrote to me about the time of his return that he would probably be married directly."

"Yes, I remember the letter. It is rather strange that he never has mentioned the subject to me. What ails you, my dear?"

"Nothing." Her voice shook a little. "I don't think it strange, grandpa. Young men are not apt to speak of such things unless questioned, I dare say."

"And so you think he has chosen well?"

"Yes; Miss Hamilton is considered beautiful and accomplished; there is no one better suited to him; her light, sunny temper will drive the clouds from his face; and, if she can only be happy in this quiet region, I think there will be no cause for anxiety."

"Well, well, perhaps it is all for the best. But when you came down I wanted to speak to you about something else. The young minister was here last night. Eh, Fairy?"

"To make the arrangements for the marriage ceremony?"

"No; I don't believe he thought of that. He came to ask my permission to spirit you away."

"Indeed! And what did you reply?"

"I told him I would talk the matter over with you and let him know. Till Zeno called on him to engage his services, he supposed, like all the rest of the wise folks, that you were to be the bride. I told him to keep the truth shady a little longer. He is a fine-looking man."

"Yes; so I suppose."

"Suppose! Why, don't you know? He preaches great sermons."

"Long ones you mean, grandpa."

"And he corrects our grammar for us. Last Friday evening he lectured to a dozen old women about the grammar and dictionary; and, although his lecture was free, he gratuitously practiced the old ladies in parsing, which they had never studied when young, and then wound up with a stunning exposition of the vulgarity of using such contractions as 'don't' and 'can't.' Now, my dear, it is n't every pastor that takes such care of his flock."

"Any thing else, grandpa?"

"Yes; he writes poetry, and loves music, and birds, and all that sort of thing, besides loving you, Fairy."

"I shall not accept of a divided heart."

"He seemed very much in earnest, and not at all doubtful of his success. What shall I tell him?"

"Tell him there is no way in which he can so certainly secure my esteem as by never alluding to the subject again. I shall never leave you, grandpa, unless you get tired of me."

"Where are you going now, Fairy?"

She had risen and was descending the steps.

"To the mountain; the woods are so lovely now. Tell grandma, when she wakes from her nap, where I am."

She went slowly down the walk, and Gerald from his window watched her till she was out of sight. The conversation to which he had perforce listened had greatly astonished him, while it had explained many things that had puzzled him. It was an inexpressible relief to his feelings to know that it was Marian who was to be married. He remembered so many little incidents to confirm this that he was lost in wonder at his own blindness.

"What a fool I have been!" he exclaimed, as he paced his room. "So hasty and jealous—so ready to condemn her—so unwilling to trust in her goodness! I might have won her for my own, but it is too late to think of that now. She can never esteem me even, when she remembers how furiously angry I was with her. I will follow her to the mountain and have an explanation at any rate. She may despise me still, but she can not treat me more coolly than she now does."

He took his hat and gloves, and, passing down the back stairs, went out unperceived. He stopped for a moment when he came to Nellie's grave. A glass vase of fresh flowers nestled amid the green leaves that wreathed the marble stone. They had grown wild in distant dells and sheltered places. Delicate clusters of the fair forest lily drooped over the polished sides of the vase, as if seeking a nearer place beside the beautiful dead. Not a weed choked the rare, choice plants that grew about the little velvety mound. On the rustic seat beneath the trees was a small work-basket, some books, and a guitar. There was no appearance of the cold solitude that goes so shiveringly

to the heart of the mourner in most graveyards ; nothing of that air of desertion and neglect that too often repels the tired wanderer among the tombs. There was life—loving, busy life—here, brightening the gloomy aspect of death and decay.

Here Lila spent the pleasant mornings by herself. Gerald knew that it was so, for it was from this place that Bridget invariably summoned her to breakfast when the weather was fair. The affectionate girl had not forgotten the dead.

A little further on his attention was attracted by a rich but chaste cenotaph of white marble, nearly hidden by the thick arbor-vitæ that surrounded it. He examined it with considerable curiosity, for he had never before seen it. Except an occasional visit to his sister's grave, he had not been over the grounds since his return. He read with moist eyes the simple inscription, "My Father !" and turned with hasty steps to resume his walk. He knew all her old haunts in the forest. He remembered well the enthusiasm of the slender, fragile child, when, with a garland of wild flowers on her head, she would, if permitted, roam and sing in the woods from morning till night. He remembered how he used to listen to the wild romance of her imagination, as it peopled the silent cliffs and filled each desolate nook with exuberant life and beauty.

He sought her first on the brow of the mountain, where the prospect was loveliest and most extensive. She was not there ; and he sat down to rest a moment on a piece of detached rock. There was not a sound to be heard, save the short chirp of a lone bird that his step had frightened. He spent an hour in fruitless search, visiting, one after another, the familiar places where they had wandered together in childhood, and where, in later years, she and Isabel had delighted to ramble. Ah, what softening recollections did the unchanged scenes awaken ! With what poignant sorrow did he reflect upon the folly that had caused their long estrangement !

He had nearly abandoned his search, concluding that she had returned home, when he came suddenly into a little opening at the southern base of the hill, and saw her sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, beside a deep, shadowy basin whose waters were supplied by the clear mountain rills. Bending trees were mirrored in its still depths, and little stray bits of sunshine went sparkling here and there across its surface.

She sat perfectly motionless, and so still was the graceful attitude that she had unconsciously assumed that she might have been mistaken for a statue. She wore a loose dress of white muslin, without ornaments of any kind. The embroidered band at the neck was not whiter than the fair throat that it partly concealed. She had come out without a bonnet, and the light veil that had shaded her hair had fallen off, and lay on the turf at her feet. Her hands were clasped upon a little Bible which was open on her knee, but she was not now reading. She had been gathering comfort from the holy pages. She had come out weak and faltering—her heart sorely wrung with its hidden sorrow, and she had grown strong and resolute again while musing and praying. How very beautiful was the untroubled serenity of her upward look!—how eloquently it told of the heavenly peace within!

Gerald hesitated long before he disturbed her. He was unwilling to break in upon the reflections which were evidently so pleasing; but he thought there would be no better opportunity to converse with her alone, and he was impatient to explain his past conduct.

She saw him as soon as he approached. A bright color suffused her cheek, but as quickly faded again, and she rose from her seat with her usual polite indifference of manner.

“Stay, Lila! Do not go yet. I came here on purpose to speak with you.”

She sat down again directly, trembling with an agitation that she strove in vain to control; and he, unasked, took the vacant seat by her side.

"Do not be alarmed, Lila," he said, observing her emotion; "I have nothing to say that will distress you. I fear even that I shall fail to interest you. But for my own sake I ask you to listen to a short narrative which will enable you to understand me better than you have lately done—which will, I hope, persuade you to dread and avoid me less. I will not detain you long."

She thought he was going to confide to her his long engagement and approaching marriage with Miss Hamilton. Her head fell lower and lower as he went on, and her thin hand shaded a face as colorless as itself.

"I need not tell you, Lila, what you already know, that nearly three years ago a rumor became universally current among my acquaintances that I was particularly attached to Miss Hamilton."

He seemed to wait for her to speak here; but a rising in her throat—a sensation of choking prevented the utterance of a syllable.

"It was in compliance with the earnest solicitation of my friend Lincoln, who was, as you know, my fellow-student, that I began those attentions which have misled all my friends. Lincoln—in opposition to his father's wishes—was engaged to her."

Lila started on hearing this, but controlled herself by a strong effort. He looked a little perplexed as he regarded her.

"The old gentleman had nothing against Grace. She was, on the contrary, a favorite of his; and he was also a particular friend of the doctor's. But he had set his heart on a union between his son and an orphan niece, who had been reared in his house, and to whom he was strongly attached. The young lady, notwithstanding his injunctions, had taken the liberty to fall in love with a promising young mechanic, whose only wealth was in his willing hands and active brain. And so it happened that when the old gentleman first left Lincoln with her of an evening to play the affectionate lover, she told him frankly about her pre-

occupied affections, and received, with a burst of delight, a similar confession from his lips. In all their subsequent interviews, Lincoln graciously substituted the mechanic for himself, and, seated in an adjoining apartment, wrote interminable letters to Grace.

"After a time the old judge began to suspect that all was not right. He knew that it was not diffidence that occasioned Lincoln to forget his cousin in society, or to sun himself so constantly in the light of Grace Hamilton's black eyes ; and he began darkly to insinuate his suspicions of the truth, and still more darkly to talk of his power to disinherit his son if his wishes were thwarted. Lincoln came to me one day almost in despair ; he told me that as soon as his cousin's betrothed could establish himself in business, she would not hesitate to take the responsibility of her future upon herself, and by immediate marriage remove the only hinderance to his own happiness. Meanwhile the old gentleman must be deceived, and he begged me only for a few months, perhaps only for a few weeks, to attach myself to Miss Hamilton.

" 'There is no other way to quiet the old gentleman's suspicions,' he said ; and he seemed to think his father's anger the most serious misfortune that could befall him.

"I had a great distaste for the whole business ; and, as truly as I loved my friend and desired his happiness, I could n't get rid of the idea that there was a meanness in blinding the old gentleman. Still Lincoln insisted ; there was no other way, and this he was confident would be above suspicion. I yielded finally, on condition of being allowed to communicate the truth to one who had long been to me the dearest of earthly friends, and who had not then learned to despise me."

Lila crushed back the tears that dimmed her eyes as she heard his last words. Still she could not speak ; she knew that her self-command would instantly desert her if she attempted it.

"I came out here two years ago on purpose to tell you.

The altered tone of your letters had partly prepared me to receive undoubtfully the report, then as now rife in the village, of your engagement to Zeno Bradford. Many things here, in connection with his frequent visits, combined to delude me. I was almost maddened by what I deemed your heartless deception. I was too proud to ask an explanation—too proud, as you will remember, to listen to one. I returned to the city without referring to my arrangement with Lincoln; for I was willing and rather desirous that you should believe that I had been beforehand with you in forming new ties of affection. I resolved to forget you, and to devote myself wholly to my profession. To oblige poor Lincoln, who was half desperate, I still went with Miss Hamilton every-where. The young mechanic met with the most provoking obstacles at every corner. He seemed to be forever just upon the point of succeeding. A month since he obtained through Dr. Hamilton's influence—to whose kindness Lincoln had strongly recommended him—a lucrative situation, and one pleasant morning, about a week afterward, he and his lady-love met in a retired church and were quietly married. They commenced house-keeping on a small scale the same day, and sent a cordial invitation to the old judge to come to tea. Lincoln says I may imagine his father's wrath, which, however, by slow degrees melted down into pity for his poor, jilted son.

“‘Never mind, my boy,’ he said, ‘there are still good fish in the sea. Do n’t take it too much to heart. Keep a stiff backbone, lad, and you’ll do.’

“‘I’m only sorry for your disappointment, dear father. You have been so happy in planning for us that it does seem cruel; but she shall see that I can take it coolly, I promise you.’

“‘That’s my own brave lad!’ said the judge, patting his shoulder approvingly.

“‘With your permission, father, I will propose to Grace Hamilton directly. It would be a pleasure to you to receive into our family the daughter of your old friend.’

“ ‘Good!’ said the old gentleman; ‘but do n’t you mention the subject even to her till the doctor and I have arranged it. I do n’t believe in letting young people manage for themselves in such important affairs. Not a word, boy! The happiness of your lifetime is involved in this, and I should be a brute of a father to allow you or any one else to meddle in it.’

“I fear, Lila, that these details will weary you; so I will only add that the result of my protracted attendance on Miss Hamilton, and also of Lincoln’s management, is that he will marry her in the course of the Winter.”

He sat in silence a short time, his dark, handsome eyes eagerly noting the changes of her downcast and now blushing countenance. Something of his old tenderness was in the gentle courtesy of his words and manner when he spoke again.

“There is something yet, Lila, that I wish to say. While I was writing in my room after dinner to-day, I overheard the conversation between you and grandpa. I did not know till then that Marian instead of yourself is to be married to Zeno.”

“O, Gerald!” she exclaimed, looking up with astonishment, “you can not have believed all this time that it was me!”

“How could I think otherwise? Is it not generally believed?”

“Yes, by the village people; but our folks know better—even Mat and Bridget; and, besides all that, you must have seen enough to convince you that he is to me just what he was years ago—only a dear friend. You had my promise”—

“Ah, Lila!” he eagerly interrupted her, “it is an inexpressible relief to me to know that, however I may have failed in securing your esteem after what has passed, the being still so fondly loved by me is yet, as I once believed her to be, preëminent for truth and purity.”

Her face was turned away now, but he could see that she trembled with suppressed feeling.

"Let me hear from your own lips, Lila, that you forgive the harshness and rudeness on my part which has so widely estranged us; and do not, I beg, so resolutely avoid me at home. The old house is gloomy in every part without you. If you can never again return my love for you let us at least be friends, and unite in ministering to the old age of those we both love. Shall we not?"

She turned suddenly toward him without raising her drooping eyes, and, twining her arms closely around his neck, hid her face with its tears and blushes in his bosom. The quick lighting up of his features as he clasped her closely was beautiful to behold. A bewildering, joyful surprise was their chief expression.

"Look up, Fairy, love! Let me see if your eyes confirm this unlooked-for joy."

She only hid her face more closely.

Waiting at the house were two messengers who had come in hot haste for the doctor. They had been to his office, but it was locked, and no body in the village had seen him since noon. Grandma Clare forthwith instituted a search of the premises, and with Marian, Mat, and Bridget started out to look herself for the truant.

Very little did Mat and Bridget observe as long as they searched together, and it was nearly impossible to induce them to hunt separately.

"After sundown!" ejaculated the old lady. "Where can he be? And where on earth is Lila? Mat," she continued, as the unsuccessful explorers met in front of the door, "go by yourself over the grounds where you have just been with Bridget. He must be in that direction if he is any where about home. Pray Heaven that no evil has come to him!"

Mat quickly returned with his mouth stretched in one long line of wonder. He reported that the missing couple were down by the "childther's" grave.

"Together?" asked Marian.

"Och, miss, an' they're no far apart, as ye kin diskiver for yeself an ye will take the throuble; an' the young doctor's arm be around her—so—there, hould still, Bridget, darlint, can't ye?—an' he is a kissin' her without riverence. Jist think o' that!" said Mat, solemnly—"in that peaceful an' howly place!"

"Did you speak to him, Mat?" said Marian, laughing and crying in her joy as she guessed what had occurred. "Did you tell the doctor, Mat, that Miss Palmer had sent for him?"

"Och, thin, an' did n't I? I made bould to disthract him, an' sez I, spakin' up loud, 'Ye are wanted, ye are; it's Miss Polly Palmer, the bachelor woman,' sez I, 'as nades yer attintions. She's took bad with the stiricks, shure.' 'She can wait,' sez he. 'An' faith,' sez I, 'the missinger spake niver a breath o' waitin'.' 'Bridget wants you, Mat,' sez he. Och, but it bates all nather intirely, this coortin'!" exclaimed Mat, puckering the freckles and pimples all over his face in his ludicrous attempts to look horror-stricken, and winking one eye at Bridget, who immediately boxed his ears.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“With trembling steps and humble reverence,
She cometh in before the Almighty’s view;
Of her, ye virgins, learn obedience,
When so ye come into those holy places,
To humble your proud faces:
Bring her up to the high altar that she may
The sacred ceremonies there partake,
The which do endless matrimony make;
And let the roaring organ loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes;
The whiles, with hollow throats,
The choristers the joyous anthem sing,
That all the woods may answer and their echo ring.”

SPENSER’S EPITHALAMION.

POOR farmer Clare! Futile were all your hopes that there would be no more getting married at present!

When Lila came to him in the evening, and with her head on his shoulder so that he could not see her face, asked for permission to become his grandchild in reality, he could not at first believe his ears. His whole countenance glowed with joyful surprise.

“We shall not leave you, grandpa. I shall be here to sing and play for you, and to hear all those dear old stories about the time when you and grandma were young. Nothing will be altered for us; only Gerald and I shall try which shall succeed best in making you happy. You do not object, dear grandpa?” said Lila, creeping closer to his side.

There were tears in the old man’s eyes—tears of joy. He was obliged to clear his throat several times before he could reply.

“The blessing of the old man be upon you, my child!

God gave a rich treasure to our keeping when his providence directed you to Rosedale."

"Ah, grandpa, it is I who should be grateful to him!"

"Well, well!" said the farmer cheerfully; "does grandma know of this new pairing among the birds?"

"I—I do n't know; I guess not. Gerald is going to tell her. There is something I want to ask, grandpa—a great favor. You will not say 'no,' will you?" said Lila, coaxingly.

"Not if it is any thing reasonable. What is it?"

"I have been thinking, and so has Gerald, that now that we are really going to settle down for life by your side, we might alter a little the"—

"The house, Fairy? No, indeed!"

"I do n't mean to alter it; I know how you hate changes; but—but"—

"Out with it, Fairy."

"If it would not disturb you too much, and if you would not mind the little change in its looks, I think"—

"I think that Gerald has stolen the Fairy's wits. What is it that you want to change, if it is not the house?"

"You know, grandpa, how anxious we have felt—all of us—about aunt Ruth's living alone in Boston—I mean with no relative near her. She is growing old, and is sometimes ill."

"Well, what has that to do with this alteration of nothing that you want me to agree to?"

"Why, that is it! She would like to come and live with us. She has written so very often lately in reply to my solicitation for her to do so. But she can not give up housekeeping. Do n't you understand?"

"I understand that it would be pleasant to have her here; but she can't, of course, keep house here, as much as Mary would be willing to crowd herself for the sake of enjoying her society."

"I am glad you think so; that is just what we say—Gerald and I. But you see the south side of the house

would be greatly improved in appearance by an addition large enough to accommodate her. She would n't want many rooms."

"Hey-day! So that's what you're driving at. Rather a crazy plan," said grandfather Clare. "The new part would look so different from the old that it would quite disfigure the whole place. I *should* like, though, to have Ruth here!"

"Now listen, grandpa! We can put a new covering on the old part, and paint it like the new. None of the rooms need be altered. There will be no innovations here. I like to see an L, especially in a large house like this. It can stand back, so as not to cover the windows of the front room; and there can be a broad portico and pillars on that side and in front of the L, to give it a finished look. Wait a minute," said Lila, as he opened his mouth to speak; "I have n't told you all yet. You may be sure that nothing you care about will be changed. In the long Winter evenings, I shall roast apples, crack walnuts, and pop corn by the crackling kitchen fire just the same. And, grandpa, when you are hedged in by the deep snow, and are tired with thinking and yawning over the fire, how refreshing it will be to go for a change to aunt Ruth's cheerful room, or to hear her pleasant voice as she comes with her knitting to keep grandma company here! Do, now, say 'yes' at once, like a pattern old grandfather, for I am tired, and I want to drive off early in the morning to engage workmen to do it at once."

"Well, well; let me have a minute to think. At whose expense is this to be done?"

"At mine, of course; but I shall collect the rent, and get my building lot for nothing."

"What will grandma say to it?"

"Grandma never opposes any thing."

"Indeed!—and so I am the only bear in the whole establishment!"

"Will you please to stop teasing, and to say 'yes'?"

"I guess there'll be no trouble, if aunt Ruth don't object. Stop, little one. When is this new wedding to come off?—immediately?"

"At the same time with Marian's. I have no preparations to make, if we remain here; and Gerald is desirous"—

He smiled as he observed her blushes and hesitation. "Gerald is desirous to secure the Fairy—is that it? Ah, well, I was young once. But did you not promise me to give up the wedding journey?"

"I promised not to accompany them to Boston. We are going to Elm Hill by ourselves. We are going directly from church, and without any parade at all."

"Indeed! and when were all these plans perfected?"

"I will not stay to be teased. There is Gerald coming; you may laugh at him as long as you please. I hear Marian calling me. Good-night."

There was a great crowd at the bridal in the village church. Mat had slyly hinted to the gossips that both the young ladies were to be married; and although many of them averred that they were not a bit surprised, for they had seen all along that Miss Marian was sure to captivate the doctor, the curiosity of old and young filled every inch of room from which the ceremony could be witnessed. Front seats were reserved for the relatives, or the "mourners," as Mat chose to call them.

The young minister was unfortunately too ill to perform the ceremony, and a strange clergyman from L. officiated.

Great was the amazement of the spectators when Zeno entered leading the beautiful Marian, and followed by Gerald and Lila. An instantaneous hush fell on the buzzing crowd, and looks of astonishment were interchanged on all sides.

"Ah, what a mistake!" exclaimed old Goody Green, scattering as she spoke an enormous pinch of snuff upon

the dresses of ladies and into the innocent eyes of dear children, who straightway manifested a tearful interest in the proceedings. "Why, they're all mixed up!"

Mr. Harrington stood near her with a provokingly-amused expression of countenance.

"Sing out!" said the excited creature, grasping his arm. "Do n't you see how confused they are? The clergyman is a stranger; he's marrying the girls to the wrong men! Sing out to him! Are ye dumb? O, goodness me! it's too late! Well, I wish I was a man, that's all!"

Well might she wish so, for the gentlemen seemed to enjoy the scene mightily. Whether they had been more discerning than a majority of the gentler sex did not appear, but the ludicrous discomfiture expressed by many a fair countenance was very edifying to their affectionate male relatives; and there was not a married lady present who did not whisper to herself, as she stole a deprecating look in the direction of her liege lord, "Ah, I shall never hear the last of this!"

"Pretty well worked up my old woman will be," muttered farmer Bradford, as they followed the newly-married couples out of the church to the carriages awaiting them. "Only to think how she has railed and scolded night and day about Zeno's choice! There's been no slumber to eyes or sleep to eyelids in our house for a week past, and that's according to Scriptor; so I won't complain. You wouldn't come to see them married, old woman, not you! How like thunder she looked when I asked her! He! he! This is too lickin' good! To be so fooled at last!"

We need not follow the bridal parties; they will do very well without us, kind reader. It would be foolish in us to dwell on the handsome reception of Dr. and Mrs. Cameron at Elm Hill, where a bridal entertainment was provided for all Gerald's old friends in the city. There Captain Rose, returned from his last voyage, was now happily domesticated. It would be needless to detail the eccentric congratulations of

quaint Dr. Hamilton, who, if we believe his own assertion, had foreseen the end from the beginning. Neither will we stop to trace the happy fortunes of the Corys, or the growing loves of Harry and Alice.

But those who have become interested in kind aunt Ruth will be glad to learn that, as the infirmities of old age crept upon her, she was persuaded to leave her city home for a quieter, pleasanter home in Rosedale.

It is a happy group that still gathers in the calm Summer evenings under the venerable trees ; it is a happy song, as rich and clear as of yore, that Lila chants while her husband sits beside her, and both, as in the olden days, watch the sunset.

THE END.







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